RED JACKET

COLONEL H. R. GORDON

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Page 308. QUEEN ESTHER THROWS THE TOMAHAWK. *Frontispiec*

The Boy's Own Favorite Series

RED JACKET

THE LAST OF THE SENECAS

BY

COLONEL H. R. GORDON

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	AN IMPORTANT PROJECT	1
II.	JED STIFFENS	12
III.	IN PERIL	23
IV.	WITHIN THE LINES	33
V.	JACK RIPLEY	44
VI.	A YOUNG PATRIOT	55
VII.	UP A TREE	65
VIII.	A DESPERATE RUN	76
IX.	A STRANGE OCCURRENCE	86
X.	AN ASTOUNDING OCCURRENCE	97
XI.	A PARTY OF FRIENDS	106
XII.	GENERAL SULLIVAN'S CALLERS	117
XIII.	NIGHT IN CAMP	128
XIV.	SUPERB WOODCRAFT	139
XV.	A BIG BLACK BEAR	148
XVI.	THE ARMY OF INVASION	158
XVII.	A PRISONER OF WAR	169
XVIII.	CHECKMATED	179
XIX.	SHARP WORK	190
XX.	CUNNING AND DUPLICITY	200
XXI.	HOG'S BACK	211
XXII.	THE FLAG OF TRUCE	223
XXIII.	JED STIFFENS'S "IDEE"	232

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIV.	WHAT JED AND JACK DISCOVERED	242
XXV.	"FAIR AS THE GARDEN OF THE LORD"	253
XXVI.	A NIGHT EXPEDITION	263
XXVII.	A RIFLE SHOT	275
XXVIII.	GROPING IN THE DARK	284
XXIX.	A STRANGE MEETING	295
XXX.	A STIRRING EXPERIENCE	305
XXXI.	A TIMELY ARRIVAL	316
XXXII.	"THE LAST OF THE SENECAS"	327
XXXIII.	A MEMORABLE EVENING	338

ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
GEN. GEORGE WASHINGTON AND GEN. JOHN SULLIVAN	4
JED STIFFENS AND THE INDIAN	40
RED JACKET'S ESCAPE	83
JACK RIPLEY AND RED JACKET	98
RED JACKET VISITS GENERAL SULLIVAN	130
COLONEL ROSSITER AND JACK	175
JED AND JACK MAKING OBSERVATIONS	246
QUEEN ESTHER THROWS THE TOMAHAWK	*Frontispiece.* 308

RED JACKET,

(SA-GO-YE-WAT-HA)

THE LAST OF THE SENECAS.

CHAPTER I.

AN IMPORTANT PROJECT.

ONE afternoon in the early spring of 1779, two distinguished-looking men were engaged in an earnest conference in the upper room of a modest residence on Market Street, Philadelphia.

The apartment was furnished with great plainness, devoid of carpet and pictures, and with only a few chairs; a large flat table in the centre of the room, littered with papers, documents, several quill pens, a squatty bottle of ink, sandbox, and sheets of foolscap; while a new tallow candle stood as erect as a sentinel on duty on the mantel above the broad fireplace. Evidently the place was the office of one of the men. Had the door communicating with the adjoining apartment been open, it would have

revealed an ordinary high bedstead, with figured coverlets, and furnishings of equal plainness.

Seated on a splint-bottomed chair, high-backed and placed near the window which opened on the street, his elbow resting at ease upon the sill, was a man about forty years of age, of swarthy complexion, and with black eyes and hair, the latter showing a few streaks of silver. He was below the ordinary stature, quite stout, displaying a double chin, with smooth-shaven face, except a small tuft of whiskers in front of each ear. The forehead was so high, and the hair so scant on the crown, as to indicate approaching baldness.

He was in the uniform of a major-general of the American army, with blue coat and yellow facings, double-breasted, and fastened to the broad, open collar. Above this was the high stock, encircling the throat, and the shoulders were ornamented with gold epaulettes, indicating the high rank of the officer. His three-cornered hat lay on the floor beside his chair, and his buff gloves had been flung carelessly into it. The usual sword was upon his left hip, and the boots reached almost to his knees, where the bottom of the buff breeches were buttoned.

While talking, he had a curious habit of drawing with one hand the boot of his crossed leg nearer to his body, since the smooth cloth and his own

plumpness caused the foot continually to slip down toward the knee which supported it. The unconscious action was a sign of the individual's nervousness, and perhaps showed a certain degree of embarrassment in the presence of his host seated on the other side of the table.

The man whom we have thus introduced with some particularity was General John Sullivan, a native of Maine, a major of militia before the Revolution, appointed a brigadier-general by Congress, in 1775, and made a major-general a year later. He was an officer of unequal ability, but always patriotic and brave. He was blamable for the defeat of Long Island, but displayed excellent qualities at Trenton and Princeton, and in his raid on Staten Island. His generalship was poor at Brandywine, but he fought like a lion there and at Germantown, and won the battle of Butts Hill in Rhode Island in 1778.

The second figure in the room possessed an imposing majesty that would have awakened admiration anywhere. His stature was fully six inches greater than Sullivan's, and the massiveness of his herculean frame showed that he must have weighed considerably more than two hundred pounds. He sat, as was his favorite custom, with his legs crossed, and no man ever had more magnificent thighs, and it cannot be denied that he was aware of the fact.

The hands and feet were large, and his uniform

was much the same as his visitor's, but the cloth was finer, newer, and brighter, and the huge cavalry boots were polished and scarcely soiled by a speck of dirt. Evidently this officer was fastidious in his dress and appearance, for the ruffled linen of his shirt and sleeves was spotless.

The smooth, benignant countenance, illumined by the light blue eyes, had a dignity and grandeur all their own. There was an impressive personality and overpowering magnetism that was the sure stamp of the highest human greatness—placed there by God himself, for this man was General George Washington.

He sat just back from the table, his legs crossed, as described, the upper foot swinging gently up and down for an inch or two, so that the toe of the boot almost touched, at regular intervals, the under side of the table. It was as unconscious on his part as the action of Sullivan in drawing up the foot that was continually slipping away from him.

He was calm, serene, and kind, always dignified, yet gentle, requiring terrific provocation to rouse him, but, when roused, as awful in his wrath as a bolt from the heavens. He read all men whom he met with an intuition that was marvellous. He had accurately taken the measure of General Sullivan, and, knowing his merits and weaknesses, had sent for him to come to Philadelphia to receive his final

GEN. GEORGE WASHINGTON AND GEN. JOHN SULLIVAN *Page 4.*

instructions in a most important enterprise that he was about to place in his hands.

And why was Washington at the national capital at that time, instead of being with the army in its winter quarters among the Highlands of the Hudson?

Simply, if the reason must be told, because Congress caused him as much trouble at times as did the public enemy. Washington insisted that each State should send its ablest men to Philadelphia and hold them sternly to their work; but, with the few exceptions that will occur to the reader, his advice was disregarded. Days went by without a quorum coming together. As is the rule, the most incapable members were the most strenuous in their views, and the body, as a whole, was continually hatching some plan of campaign that the great man's military genius told him was suicidal. He had just succeeded in quenching a scheme for the invasion of Canada, though some of the members were still insistent for it, being too blind or stubborn to see the force of the unanswerable arguments which the Commander-in-chief brought against it.

But Washington was not always successful in enforcing his views upon the law-makers. The shameless "Conway cabal" had its supporters among Congressmen, and more than once unpardonable snubs and slights were put upon him; but that wonderful patriot heeded them not. Seeing

with unwavering faith the victory from the beginning, as unerringly as ever the prophet of the Lord read aright his divine vision, he went unfalteringly forward to the triumphant end.

On the present occasion, however, Washington and Congress were in accord. They had agreed upon a most important campaign, and it was that which was under discussion between him and his visitor.

"The outrages of the Indians have passed beyond bearing," he said, calmly addressing Sullivan across the table. "Last July they laid waste the settlement at Wyoming, and a few months later ravaged Cherry Valley. They have made many raids elsewhere, slaying helpless old men, women, and children, and showing no mercy to any one. There is only one way," added Washington, compressing his lips and nodding his head slightly forward, "to end all this."

"And that is to strike the dusky devils such a blow that they wont be able to hit back for a long time to come—confound them and the Tories!"

General Sullivan came near uttering a stronger word, but checked himself. He struck his knee with his open palm, his eyes flashed, and he angrily added:

"I wish I could have a chance at them!"

"You shall have it! I have selected you to lead

the expedition into the Indian country, there to work all the destruction and mischief possible. The lesson which you are to teach the red men must be as severe as you can make it."

The swarthy face of General Sullivan glowed with pleasure. No man revered Washington more than he. He recalled that after the disaster at Long Island (when the Commander-in-chief alone saved the Continental army from destruction), and at Brandywine, Washington did not utter the slightest reproof because of Sullivan's mismanagement. That officer's self-reproach would have been less bitter had his superior vented some of his displeasure upon him.

And here was another proof of the great man's confidence in him, who was ready to die for his beloved commander.

" The plan of the campaign has been carefully thought out. You will rendezvous at Wyoming, where you will assemble a force consisting of regulars and Pennsylvania and Connecticut militia to the number of three thousand men. As soon as you can make ready, you will advance up the Susquehanna into the country of the Six Nations, and there spread fire and desolation."

" It shall be done!" exclaimed Sullivan, with an emphatic nod; " for it is the Iroquois who are at the bottom of all the mischief."

"True. They are masters of all the neighboring tribes, and would have been masters of the continent before this if the white men had not come to America. It was they, and especially the Senecas, who wrought such dire havoc at Wyoming and Cherry Valley, and, General, they must feel the weight of the hardest blow you can strike."

"God willing, they shall!"

"While you are advancing northward, General Clinton will march westward from Albany up the Mohawk Valley to the headwaters of the Susquehanna, down which he will make his way until he meets you. He will take a thousand men, more or less, so that, when he joins you, you will have a considerable force under your command."

"More than I should have asked, and more than I expected."

"You see, General, we can afford to run no risk of failure in an enterprise of this kind. About the same time that you start, Colonel Daniel Brodhead will set out from Pittsburg, at the head of six hundred men for the Indian country."

"As a diversion, sir, I suppose?"

Washington nodded.

"They will have work of their own to do; but you have correctly interpreted the purpose of Colonel Brodhead. Is it necessary, General, for me to give you any counsel?"

"Counsel from *you* is always valuable, no matter to whom it is given. Congress would lead us to the dogs, but for you."

The great man smiled. Flattery produced no more effect upon him than abuse.

"I am fallible, like all men, and I make plenty of errors."

"I never have seen any of them; and, begging your pardon, I doubt whether any one else has."

"None the less, I have a lively consciousness of them. I am sorry that Congress was so strenuous in asking the help of France for the invasion of Canada. The fleets of England are stronger than those of our ally. She would blockade their ships in the St. Lawrence and hold them there. While her armies descended upon the posts, we should be obliged to weaken to help in the conquest of Canada, and our situation would be most hapless, indeed."

"And if Canada were conquered, France would claim it as her share of the spoils."

"Undoubtedly. After helping England to win the province from France, we should help France to win it back from England. I am loath to place ourselves under too great obligation to a foreign power, even though she be our ally."

"How far, sir, is it safe to count upon the friendship of a nation?"

"Just so far as it is to her interest to extend that

friendship, and no further," was the emphatic reply of Washington. "France is our friend, not so much because she loves us as because she hates England."

"And an infernally poor friend she has proven herself to be!" said Sullivan hotly, having in mind the behavior of D'Estaing, with his fleet off Newport, the preceding summer, which came near resulting in the undoing of Sullivan. "Whenever there 's a chance to help us, they run for the West Indies, where they claim important business requires their attention."

"France has done us valuable service, and will do still more. But we have wandered from the business in hand. My most earnest counsel to you is to bear in mind every hour of the day and night that you are advancing into an Indian country, and will have to fight the most cunning and the bravest of red men. *Beware of an ambuscade!* One mistake may be fatal. When ready, strike hard; I repeat it, *strike hard!* For in doing so you will save the lives of many of our own people. The Senecas have been the chief offenders, and should therefore receive the chief punishment. And yet," added Washington, with curious thoughtfulness, "there is one among them to whom, if he comes in your way, I shall be glad to have you show consideration."

"I shall be pleased to obey your wishes in the smallest respect."

"I will explain to you some time why I have asked consideration for one member of the Senecas. He whom I have in mind is the Sachem, Red Jacket."

"I assure you, sir, your request shall ever be before me."

Washington gravely bowed, and, after further discussion of the preparations for, and the particular conduct of, the projected expedition into the Indian country, General Sullivan bade his chief good-by and withdrew.

CHAPTER II.

JED STIFFENS.

THE Iroquois, or Six Nations, was the most remarkable Indian confederation ever known on this continent. They originally occupied Central New York, and when first known consisted of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas, their title then being the Five Nations; but the Tuscaroras of the South were added at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the name was changed to the Six Nations.

This confederacy was compact, well organized, and well governed, to which fact its fast-growing supremacy over all adjoining tribes was to be attributed. They have been termed the Romans of the New World, and Washington's remark, that had the coming of the white man been delayed the Iroquois would in time have conquered all the aborigines of the continent, was founded upon logic and probability.

This is not the place to give the many interesting facts regarding the Iroquois, except so far as they are concerned with the events we have set out to

narrate. During the Revolution, these Indians arrayed themselves on the side of the English, the only exception being those who were living at that time in Canada. Their bravery and fine discipline enabled them to strike ferocious blows against our exposed frontier, until the time arrived when Congress and Washington saw that the only salvation of the border from devastation, outrage, and destruction was by administering a chastisement that would seriously cripple the terrible red men. It was, therefore, determined to send a strong force into the heart of the Iroquois country, burn their towns, destroy their crops, and show the severity that the Indians themselves had displayed toward the white people; though of course the Americans could never resort to the merciless methods of the savages.

General Sullivan, who was intrusted with the important work, remained in Philadelphia, conferring with Washington and leading members of Congress until all the details of the campaign were thoroughly evolved and agreed upon. Our readers will recall that the year 1779 was comparatively barren of important events, so far as the Revolution was concerned. The first flush of the struggle was over. Defeats and victories, sufferings and privations, and the long-continued struggle, had brought their natural result in a subsidence of enthusiasm on both

sides. The prosecution of the war languished, and it looked in many quarters as if each army was waiting to see what the other meant to do.

Beginning in New England, the war had steadily drifted southward. At the close of the preceding year, the British had captured Savannah, and soon after Georgia was so overrun and subjugated by the enemy that a royal governor was installed. After Howe had evacuated Philadelphia, he was pursued by Washington and overtaken and defeated at Monmouth in June, 1778. Washington then returned to his old camp, near White Plains, and passed the winter in a line of positions extending from the Highlands to the Delaware. There were no important movements, the most brilliant exploit being the capture of Stony Point by General Wayne in the month of July. Such being the public situation, the time was favorable for Sullivan to press his campaign against the Iroquois in Central New York.

The scene, therefore, shifts to Wyoming, the lovely settlement in Eastern Pennsylvania, on the Susquehanna, which was desolated by the Tories and Indians during the preceding July. Very different was the appearance of the place in the spring months of 1779 from what it presented when it vainly opposed the spoilers. Troops began moving toward Wyoming at the opening of May, and converged steadily upon the settlement through the weeks

that followed. The march was slow and laborious, for roads had to be cut through the woods, marshes and swamps bridged, and the way cleared for the transport of the artillery and baggage between the Delaware and Susquehanna. It was not until the middle of June that the first important arrival of troops took place at Wyoming; but within the following month all had reached that point, and on the last day in July, the preparations being completed, the three thousand men faced northward, and began their advance into the Indian country.

The scene was picturesque and striking. The troops marched along the banks of the beautiful river, which naturally grew shallower and shallower as they ascended towards its source. One hundred and fifty flatboats, laden with cannon and stores, were driven by means of poles or drawn up-stream with ropes pulled by men walking along the banks. So powerful was the force that there was nothing to be feared, and discipline was much relaxed. The men sang, and at times were as boisterous as so many boys let out for play. The bands awoke the woods with their tuneful strains, when they felt in the mood for doing so, and every now and then squads of soldiers came out from the surrounding forests with the game which they had bagged; while a number of those on the boats managed, by the exercise of a great deal of skill and patience, to woo some

of the inhabitants from the Susquehanna, as the noisy boatmen used their poles or were dragged up stream by their "yo-hoing" comrades.

At nightfall, the boats were moored to the bank, and the scores of camp-fires twinkled far up and down stream. Around these were gathered the soldiers: some engaged in preparing the evening meal, most of them singing, smoking, and indulging in antics; while the officers, having turned over their animals to the care of their attendants, sat perhaps by themselves, looking with indulgent eyes upon the singular picture, or discussing the features of the campaign that must of necessity assume a more serious character as they approached the hostile country.

The most thoughtful man in this large company was General Sullivan himself. As was to be expected, he had had several quarrels with congressmen before leaving New York, because of his insistence upon their following his wishes as concerned the campaign. At one time, he probably would have been removed, and compelled to give place to a more tractable officer, but for the tact of Washington. Here he was at last, close to the New York frontier, with everything in shape to carry out in spirit and letter the instructions of the Commander-in-chief; for Sullivan invariably placed *his* orders above any received from Congress.

On the night we have in mind, when the sky

was full of stars, and scarcely a breath of air ruffled the leaves of the surrounding woods, General Sullivan was seated on a blanket spread upon the ground, his back against a stump, his chubby legs stretched out in front, and a pipe in his mouth. Although the night was sultry, a small fire was burning near the middle of the tent, probably for the purpose of illuminating the interior, since the temperature would have been more comfortable without anything of that nature. The officer held his arms folded over his chest, but was so indifferent to the air, which most of the men found discomforting, that he did not so much as unbutton his coat.

Sunk in deep thought, he puffed slowly at his pipe; but it was evident he was expecting a call, since, when the orderly announced the name "Mr. Stiffens," the General instantly said, "Show him in!"

The man who entered was tall, sinewy, alert of manner, and in the prime of an unusually vigorous manhood. His dress was a nondescript, consisting of a slouch hat, a coat resembling that worn by the cavalry of the Continental army, with belt around his waist, and with the leggings and moccasins of an Indian. Powder-horn and bullet-pouch were suspended from his neck, and he carried in one hand a long old-fashioned flint-lock rifle. In short, the

man, who saluted the General, and at his request seated himself on the ground near him, was Jed Stiffens, the most famous scout and ranger attached to the American army, whose services were of so brilliant a nature that they attracted the attention of Washington, and caused him to recommend his employment by Sullivan.

One fact lent additional value to the peculiar work of Jed Stiffens, so far as it could be rendered in behalf of General Sullivan. His birthplace was Central New York. When a boy, he had done fine work in the French and Indian War; he had been a prisoner for several years among the Indians, and, gifted by nature with a special aptitude for acquiring languages, he was as much at home among any member of the Iroquois confederation, so far as their tongue was concerned, as were the Indians themselves.

Fully trusted by Sullivan, who, it need not be said, had a large number of other scouts on duty, that officer relied more upon what Jed told him than upon all the others. He treated him with every consideration, and when the two were seated near each other, no one, not observing the two uniforms, would have suspected there was any difference of rank between them.

" Jed," said Sullivan, puffing his pipe faster, and then removing it with a nervous quickness from

between his lips, "we 're getting pretty close to the Indian country: the Iroquois must know what 's coming."

"There 's no doubt of that, Gin'ral. They 'd be bigger fools than they was ever took for if they had n't found it out long ago."

"What are they doing?"

"Their runners have been goin' back and forth for nigh onto a week; they 'll get their warriors together and make a fight."

General Sullivan gave a contemptuous sniff, smoked rapidly for a few seconds, and then said:

"Nothing would suit me better. But, Jed, it never struck me that that 's the Indian style of doing business. There 's nothing they dislike more than to stand up in a fair, open, square fight."

"And they won't do nothin' of the kind this time."

"But you said as much a moment ago."

"I did n't say nothin' of the kind, Gin'ral," was the blunt response of the scout, which caused the impulsive officer to turn angrily upon him; but before he could utter the sharp reproof that was on his lips, Jed Stiffens added:

"I said they 'd git their warriors together and make a fight; but when that 's done, it 'll be in the ginooine, reg'lar style, which the same is to say that they 'll do their purtiest to draw you into

ambush, jest as Braddock catched it when you and me was boys."

"When they find the scheme won't work, what then?"

"They 'll try to hold a powwow, and patch up a treaty with you, with the idee of gettin' you to turn back and let 'em alone. Then, when you 're fairly out of the way, they 'll begin their deviltry agin. They 'll wait till you and Gin'ral Washington have got your hands full, and then they 'll make things hum."

"Well," said the General, with something like a chuckle, "when they find that the second scheme won't work any better than an ambuscade, what *then?*"

Jed Stiffens shrugged his shoulders, deliberately drew a clay pipe from an interior pocket of his coat, filled it with bits of tobacco, which he rolled and crumpled in the palm of one hand, then pressed them with his forefinger into the bowl of his pipe, which was lit with an ember dexterously flirted from the tiny fire; after which he puffed for a minute or two, so that the interior was pretty well filled with vapor. Finally he spoke, with the pipe still between his teeth:

"A cat, when druv into a corner, will fight like a wounded painter, and a redskin is jest like a wounded painter [panther]."

"That suits me," was the grim comment of General Sullivan; who asked, the next moment, as if the thought had just come to him: "I suppose, Jed, you are acquainted with Red Jacket?"

"Well, rayther—confound his eyes!"

"What do you think of him?"

"I dunno," was the curious response; "he 's a mystery to me and a good many of his people. You know some of his brother chiefs have called him a coward to his face, and he did n't deny it."

"I have heard such statements; are they based on truth?"

"If you mean to ask whether Red Jacket has been called a coward, I answer, yes, for I heard Young King, Captain Pollard, and Little Billy, all three of 'em chiefs, tell him he had the heart of a sick squaw,and always hid when the fightin' begun."

"And Red Jacket submitted to the charge?" exclaimed the General, removing his pipe, and looking at the scout in surprise.

"He could n't help himself. Red Jacket says he is an orator, which was what the Great Spirit meant he should be; and, by gracious! the Sachem is right. He 's the greatest orator the Senecas or any of the Six Nations ever had—or by thunder ever will have! When I listen to him, I feel jes' the same as if my crown had been skulped."

"Yes; he has the reputation of being a wonderful

orator; he has been active in stirring up his people to fight us; he has been on the war-path himself, and he had a good deal to do, one way or other, both at Wyoming and Cherry Valley, though Brant, Butler, Cornplanter, and the other leaders were the most active; and yet, when I was talking with Washington, at the time he placed me in command of this expedition, he made a special request of me."

"What was it, Gin'ral?"

"That, if I should happen to meet Red Jacket, as seems likely to be the case, I should show him special consideration. Such a wish on the part of General Washington is equivalent to a command to both of us."

"That depends," was the blunt response of Scout Stiffens.

"How so?"

"So fur as *I 'm* concerned, Red Jacket will git the same consideration from me as *I* git from *him*, which the same is what I 'd tell the Gin'ral if he was a settin' here this minute, the same as you. He 's a mighty smart man, and there ain't many things I would n't do fur him; but one of them things is trustin' an Injin, 'specially when his name is Red Jacket, and he is a sachem of the Senecas."

CHAPTER III.

IN PERIL.

JED STIFFENS had been caught in some of the most perilous situations conceivable during his long and adventurous career, and more than one of his escapes bordered on the marvellous; but he was forced to confess to himself, on the second day succeeding the interview with General Sullivan, just narrated, that he was so close to death that all hope dwindled to a shadow which threatened to vanish at any moment.

With the approach to the Indian country, the lax discipline of the invading army diminished, and every precaution against blunder and disaster was taken. The commander of the American forces kept his scouts well in advance, under orders to exercise sleepless vigilance, and especially to guard against ambuscade, since there was no doubt that the Iroquois would call into play all the wonderful cunning they possessed to bring about the ruin of the invading force, which was too strong for them to meet in open battle.

A runner had arrived from General James Clinton,

who, as will be remembered, was advancing up the Mohawk Valley, with the intention of effecting a junction with Sullivan. Clinton was at the head of about a thousand men, with which force he reached Otsego Lake, whose outlet, as the reader is aware, is the source of the Susquehanna. The stream at that point is no more than a brook across which a person can readily leap, and in many places its depth at certain seasons is only a few inches.

It will be seen, therefore, that in its shape it was useless for the purposes of General Clinton. But there are few difficulties which cannot be overcome by Yankee ingenuity. Across the head of the outlet a strong dam was built, while the two hundred and twenty boats, loaded with men and supplies, ranged themselves in front of it. Gradually the waters of the lake rose until they reached a height of several feet above the usual level, when the dam was suddenly torn away, and the outrushing torrent carried the craft to a depth sufficient to float them all with safety. News of this occurrence was carried to Sullivan, who looked for a junction with his subordinate as one of the certainties of the immediate future.

Well aware of the reliance placed upon him by the leader of the expedition, and appreciating fully his responsibility, Jed Stiffens called all his brilliant

woodcraft into play, and assumed risks from which the bravest man might have shrunk without discredit to himself.

Despite all the precaution he could use, the fact that he was compelled to manœuvre against fully a dozen, if not more, of the best scouts of the Six Nations, was a handicap that might well have excluded hope of outwitting them. What Jed specially strove against was to prevent detection by these men; for, in the event of his own discovery, his movements must of necessity assume a defensive character. None of the white men was so well known to the Iroquois as he, and it would be an enormous advantage for them, at the start, if they could " remove " him from the momentous problem by which they were confronted.

So brilliantly did the white man carry himself that he had pushed forward for several miles, and made a number of important discoveries before, despite all he could do, his enemies detected his presence in the woods, and rightly surmised his business.

It happened in this way:

The scout interpreted the signals that became manifest to the ear as well as the eye. From several wooded elevations he observed fine wisps of smoke, so thin and fine against the summer sky that the ordinary vision would not have noticed them.

Some were vertical, like shadowy streaks against the clear blue, while others were broken, with distinct intervals of atmosphere between their parts. Jed's Indian training told him how these were made. A few bits of twigs and leaves were kindled, and, when fairly ablaze, were partly smothered by a blanket flung over the fire for a few moments, and then removed. This being done at regular intervals, the vapor ascended in spots, as may be said, and when shown against the sky beyond presented a curiously mottled appearance.

It was not the first time he had seen signals made in that manner, and, as has been said, he knew what they signified. Then there were bird calls that vibrated through the forest arches, all emitted with a skill that would have misled the most experienced scout, but which did not deceive him. The fact that a number of these were within a few rods of where he was stealing through the dense, rocky wood, warned him of his peril, and yet he continued to press on.

The interpretation which the veteran gave to all this was that a force of fully a hundred scouts were manœuvring in front, at varying distances, while not a few were in his immediate neighborhood. Beyond them, to the northward, was a force of probably a thousand Iroquois, possibly greater, who were steadily falling back before the advance of the

American army. *Somewhere* along that line of march they intended to ambuscade the white men, if Indian cunning proved sufficient for the task. The precise spot perhaps was already fixed by the Iroquois, but, whether it was a mile or fifty miles in advance, there was no means as yet of finding out. Despite the seeming impossibility of the task, Jed Stiffens was determined not to return to General Sullivan until he could clear away all doubt on the point.

The scout had reached a slope, not more than a hundred feet in height, thickly wooded, with abundant undergrowth, and interspersed here and there with rocks and large boulders. It will be remembered that it was the season of the year when the foliage was at its best, and that there were places in the wood where a person could not see six feet in advance.

It was necessary for the scout to pass over this ridge, and enter a comparatively level stretch of country beyond, which was only partly wooded and whose configuration was familiar to him. But he knew that the Indian scouts were on all sides, and if he succeeded in reaching the crest undiscovered, he was almost certain to be seen when at the summit. To retreat from such a position might well tax the skill of an insect itself, and, despite his dauntless bravery, Jed came to a halt with the question in his

mind: "Having already gone further than any one else dare go, won't it be certain death for me to keep on?"

Had it been night—even though there was a full moon—he would not have paused; but the morning of the long summer day was only well advanced, and time seemed too valuable for him to throw away the intervening hours in idleness.

Among the peculiarities of this remarkable man was a firm belief in what he was pleased to term his "promptings," which was another name for the more scientific term intuition — that mysterious impulse which is a more or less controlling factor in the lives of us all, and of whose nature the profoundest brain can form no clear conception.

Jed's "promptings" were to enter the jaws of death by passing over the ridge, or at least climbing to the summit; but an equally strong impulse advised him to be in no hurry about it.

In his favorite crouching posture, he had crept up to the side of a rock some twenty feet in extent, standing less than half his height above the ground in which it was imbedded. Instead of rising to his feet, now that he was at the end of his journey for the moment, he sat down in a peculiar sidelong position, with his head against the stone and most of his body on the ground. Almost unconsciously he placed himself under an overhanging bush, which

screened him from the observation of any one who might walk past within three or four steps.

But Jed Stiffens never lost sight of one fact,—that was, the wonderful keenness of vision on the part of the Indians which enabled them to trail a man through the wood and over the ground where the faintest trace was barely visible. The scout had the knack of walking like a warrior, which may be described as lifting up and placing down the foot with each movement made at the same instant. Thus, instead of first resting the heel, and then the ball and toe, as the weight of the body is thrown forward, the entire bottom of the foot touches the ground simultaneously.

Jed had copied this habit from the Senecas, for it is the true way to walk when on the war-path. The footprints are much lighter, and where the ground is favorable they can be completely hidden.

But Jed himself could distinguish the trails which he crossed before reaching the ridge. All the skill of the Iroquois could not conceal them from his eyes, where the leaves lay so abundantly on the ground. Naturally, therefore, he concluded that if *he* was equal to such a performance, the Indian scouts could do as well.

But it has been shown that he wore moccasins. Consequently, if an Iroquois noticed his faint footprints, by what possible means could he be led to

suspect that they were made by a white man, and not by one of his own people ?

Unfortunately, there was a way of learning the fact. An Indian in walking puts down his feet with the toes pointed to the front, or so nearly so that the variation is not perceptible. A white man turns out his toes to a greater or less degree. Despite all the crucial training to which Jed Stiffens had subjected himself since boyhood, he was never able to overcome this habit, which it is wrong to call a peculiarity, since naturally it belongs to us all. He could tread the wood for hours, and walk for miles in absolute imitation of an Indian, and then he would forget himself and drop back into his old practice. It would have been strange had it been otherwise, when his brain was intently occupied with more important matters. He knew beyond a doubt that within a hundred feet of where he was crouching, he had walked with his feet turned out, as was natural with him. Consequently, if one of his lynx-eyed enemies caught sight of the shadowy impressions on the leaves, he would know they had been made by a white man.

" And knowin' that I 'm the only chap as would ventur' 'mong them like this," muttered Jed, with pardonable assurance, " he 'd know it was *me* to a dead sartinty. What I oughter done," he added with self-disgust, " is to have tied my toes in so as

to make me walk like an Injin when I war n't thinkin'. One of these days I 'll try it."

Faintly through the warm summer air sounded the soft cawing of a crow, as if calling to its mate from one of the tree tops. The note was so gentle that, with all his acuteness, the scout could not make certain whether it was within a hundred feet or a hundred yards of where he was crouching.

" 'T was well done; but if that ain't a Seneca warrior signallin' to Red Jacket or Young King, or some one else, then my name ain't Jed Stiffens — I thought so!"

Precisely the same note was returned from another point of the compass; but there must have been a millionth of a note out of accord, for the listener had no trouble in locating it as coming from between him and the crest of the slope, and consequently only a very short distance from his hiding-place.

" Now, that cawin' may mean one of a dozen things," he continued. " As like as not, it is only meant to let the two know where they are; and yet it may signerfy that an Injin scout has diskivered that Jed Stiffens is foolin' 'mong 'em, and it 's a toss up as to which one shall have the pleasure of wearin' his topknot at his girdle. Howsumever, my promptin's says: ' Jed, you must climb to the top of the hill afore you turns back to Gin'ral Sullivan.' Wal, I 'll be shot!"

The ear that just then was pressed against the side of the rock brought a low, almost inaudible rustling to his consciousness. Like a flash, the meaning broke upon him. There was an Indian warrior on the other side of that huge stone, crouching low like himself, almost within arm's reach—and, what was more, he was aware, too, of the presence of the white man so near him!

CHAPTER IV.

WITHIN THE LINES.

JED STIFFENS, the most skilful and subtle of all the American scouts, suddenly awoke to the fact that he was face to face with a dusky enemy as shrewd and daring as himself.

True, the breadth of a massive rock lay between them, but that at the most was no more than six feet. Whether the warrior was there when the white man arrived, or whether he had just reached the point, was something that could not be determined; but that he knew of the presence of the white man as his *vis-à-vis* Jed did not for a moment doubt.

The situation could not have been more peculiar. Under such circumstances, Jed had learned that he must think fast, even though his action was tardy. What should he do, now that the new danger must be disposed of in some way ?

Naturally, several lines of action suggested themselves. He might creep round the rock and attack his enemy. He had no fear of the result of a personal encounter with any Iroquois, and, could he

have been assured of a "square deal," he would have taken that course; but it was liable to bring a variety of disasters. If Jed could leap upon his man and bear him to the earth, he could not extinguish life quickly enough to prevent his adversary making an outcry, which would instantly bring others to the spot, with a result that must be fatal to the white man.

He might wait where he was, in the hope that the warrior would venture upon an attack; while the most expeditious course was to creep softly and swiftly over the upper part of the rock to the other side and drop like an avalanche upon the miscreant, crushing him to the ground before he could emit a single yawp. But, suppose the Indian was on the lookout for such an attack? At what a fine disadvantage he would catch his enemy, as he began crawling over the top of the rock!

It must be borne in mind that these two men were not armed as they would have been had the time been a hundred years later. While pistols were comparatively common during the Revolution, their use was mostly confined to officers, and especially on shipboard. Being flintlocks, they were big, cumbrous affairs, unfitted to be worn by men on foot. Scouts like Stiffens and Indians never carried them. They confined themselves to rifles and hunting-knives, while the dusky antagonist

sometimes sported a tomahawk. Thus Jed had his long-bladed and keen knife thrust in his girdle; though it was a fashion with many in those days to carry it suspended by a support directly in front of the chest, where it could be brought into play with a trifle more quickness than when in the sash or girdle. It will be borne in mind, too, that all the larger weapons were heavy, single-barrelled, and muzzle-loading. It was an unusually skilful hunter who could fire and reload his rifle five or six times a minute, though Jed Stiffens once surpassed that astonishing rate, and thereby won a record among his friends.

All are aware that a solid substance like a rock is a much better conductor of sound than the air. But for the white man placing one ear against the stone, he would have failed to discover his danger. The act was purely aimless on his part, and the result, as we have shown, astonished him, for he was not dreaming of anything of the kind.

The almost inaudible noise was such as would have been made by some portion of a person's body or clothing rubbing against the rock. It showed that the Indian was moving, or rather had moved, for the faint sound was audible only for an instant, when it ceased, and throughout the four or five minutes that Jed Stiffens held his ear glued against the stone he failed to catch the faint disturbance again.

The one course which manifestly was that of common sense has not been mentioned. That was for Jed to withdraw from the spot and not lose a minute in getting out of the perilous neighborhood. He had been discovered to the enemy, and for the time his usefulness as a scout was ended. Baffled at this point, he should fall back and make his essay elsewhere. Such a course would have been prudent, but Jed was not yet ready to adopt it. He meant to pick up a few fragments of knowledge before he abandoned the scent.

Fired with this new resolve, he acted promptly, doing the very thing that it would seem of all others he ought not to have done. Instead of passing around the rock in either direction, he silently rose to a nearly perpendicular attitude, placed one knee on the edge and gently raised himself to the top. Then, with the same absence of noise, he began crawling to the opposite side.

And yet, if his enemy resorted to the same means that he had employed, he must have heard him. Nevertheless, Jed Stiffens kept on, his rifle in his left hand and his knife tightly grasped in his right, for that was the weapon on which his chief reliance was placed, believing, as he did, that a deadly encounter would be precipitated within the next minute.

Hearing and seeing nothing, he suspected the

Indian was unaware of his approach. Jed now laid down his gun, assumed a stooping posture, with his feet firmly under him, and drawing in his breath, with the knife upraised, he made a single, cat-like bound over the further side of the rock, certain of descending directly upon the shoulders of the unsuspecting redskin and throttling him ere he could make the first outcry.

But the scout was disappointed. Instead of dropping upon the head and shoulders of a fierce Iroquois, he fell plumply to the ground. Suspecting his foe had discovered his approach and leaped to one side, Jed made a second bound that carried him several paces further, and then whirled about, knife in hand and at bay.

Not a living person was in sight. For a moment he suspected the whole thing was a blunder, and the sound that had startled him had not been made by an Indian; but a moment's investigation proved he was not mistaken. There were the imprints on the leaves and soft ground made unmistakably by a pair of moccasins, showing on the very spot where he had expected to find the owner of them.

The explanation was self-evident: learning of the presence of the white scout, the Indian had withdrawn undetected; not necessarily because he held Jed in personal fear, but that he might summon enough help to make it impossible for his

antagonist to escape from the trap into which he had run.

There could be no question now as to the only course left to Jed. His prompting to climb to the crest of the slope disappeared with that drop from the top of the rock, and he knew that the only chance for his life was to get away from the spot without a second's unnecessary delay.

He listened intently, and glanced sharply around. He neither heard nor saw anything to cause immediate alarm. Stepping quickly to the side of the rock, he extended his hand, seized his rifle and, sinking again to a crouching position, began stealing toward the base of the slope, which was close at hand, intending to follow it a short way and then to flank the dangerous spot by a long turn to the left. The impulse was strong still to place himself on the other side of the summit, and he was confident that when he succeeded in doing so the result would repay tenfold for all the risk involved.

He had gone about twenty steps, at a moderate lope, when his quick ear caught the snapping of a twig, so directly in front that he instantly turned again to the left, but doing so at a sharper angle than before. Thrusting his knife back into his girdle, he held his rifle ready for instant use, for it was not to be supposed that when the impending collision occurred it would be a hand-to-hand one.

For the moment, Jed Stiffens was in the position of the immortal John Smith. He found so much use for his eyes that he could pay no heed to his feet. While, unlike his famous predecessor, he did not sink into a bog, he stepped upon a stone which was almost circular and large enough to roll under his foot. Despite his activity, he dropped like a flash on his side, though the fall only caused a jar.

"Confound it!" he angrily muttered; "I oughter knowed——"

But before the words could frame themselves the vicious crack of a rifle rang among the trees, and the bullet aimed at the head of the scout whizzed a few inches above his crown. The fall and the report of the rifle, fired only a few yards away, were so nearly simultaneous that the Seneca who aimed the weapon believed he had slain the white man as he meant to do, and, with smoking rifle in one hand and knife in the other, he emitted a faint but triumphant cry and dashed forward to wrench the reeking trophy from the head of his victim.

The warrior was scarcely a second behind the white man in awaking to the fact that he had made a mistake; for, short as was the interval separating the two, barely one half of it was passed by the Iroquois when he saw his intended victim whirl with lightning quickness on his side, rise to one knee and bring his rifle to his shoulder.

"Not just yet, my beauty!" said Jed, speaking in the Seneca tongue; for he had recognized his assailant as belonging to that tribe.

The Indian was caught at frightful disadvantage. The smoking rifle which he grasped in one hand was useless, and he was too far off to bring his knife into play; but, with inimitable dexterity, he made a tremendous side-leap for the nearest tree trunk that could shelter his body. The quickest man that lived, however, cannot equal the speed of a bullet from a rifle, and Jed Stiffens caught him "on the fly," the savage making a bound into the air and sprawling headlong at the base of the tree which he had intended to use as his shield.

"If the aforesaid Jedediah Stiffens knows anything about this bus'ness," muttered the scout assuming the upright posture, "Gin'ral Sullivan need n't bother himself 'bout *your* botherin' him."

But the narrow escape was of necessity only for the moment. The report of the gun, the cry of the victim as he went down, and the sight of the white man's footprints, which must have greeted more than one of his enemies, would bring an indefinite number of the Iroquois to the spot within the next few minutes. Jed's promptings, therefore, impelled him to lose no time in taking himself somewhere else with the least appreciable delay. The

JED STIFFENS AND THE INDIAN. *Page 40.*

necessity of ascending the wooded slope was as imperative as ever, but it must be postponed.

Jed either heard or fancied he heard something moving through the wood. He once more changed his line of flight, which carried him a brief distance from the foot of the ridge, when he again turned and took a course parallel with the crest of the elevation. Critical as was his situation, he smiled at his own action in turning the toes of his feet to the front. Probably in all his experience there was never less need of his doing this than in the present instance; for, if his enemies were on his trail and near at hand, none of them could be switched off by such an artifice.

It need not be said that at such times the highly trained faculties of the fugitive were keyed to the highest point. Nothing that was visible or audible escaped him. So wonderfully skilful was his own progress that he seemed to pass over the leaves without ruffling them or making the least noise; but, with all his skill in those respects, he knew that every Indian within a hundred feet who was on the alert was aware of his location and the course he was following.

One of Jed Stiffens's accomplishments was his fleetness of foot. Framed by nature for speed, his long training had given him an ability in that respect which he had never seen surpassed, and indeed

very seldom equalled. Such was his confidence in his sprinting ability that he had never hesitated to place himself in situations where his life depended upon that single quality. Many a time his doom would have been sealed had only one of his pursuers been able to run as fast as he.

His purpose now was to reach a point where all or most of his pursuers would be thrown behind him. That accomplished, he would have considered the incident over,—the necessity of running an indefinite distance being in the nature of a simple formality.

But, as often happens in this life, that which was believed to be the moment of safety proved to be the one of extremest peril. He was still speeding through the wood on a swift loping trot, when something flickered among the vegetation in front. The peculiar appearance did not present itself at one point, but at two,—one being well to the right and the other to the left.

He read their meaning aright. By some exasperating mischance, two Indians had obtained a position in advance, and if he continued running he must of necessity pass directly between them. More properly, he would have to make the attempt, since success was as impossible as to save his life by leaping over a precipice a thousand feet in height.

Each Indian had sheltered himself behind a tree

trunk more than a foot in diameter, where, with ready weapon, he coolly awaited the moment when the white man should come fairly within range. Only a brief distance more was necessary. Jed Stiffens had but to take a half-dozen steps when he would be exactly where his enemies wanted him.

But it need not be said that Jed Stiffens refrained from taking the steps mentioned.

CHAPTER V.

JACK RIPLEY.

IT will be noted that the scout held one corner of a triangle, while each of his dusky enemies occupied another. They would be mutually separated by a distance of perhaps fifty yards. This was an easy range for a marksman, and no one of the three would have asked anything better, but for the interfering vegetation. There was so much of this that it was liable to spoil the aim of the keenest-eyed hunter or most unerring rifleman.

The dense undergrowth and shrubbery caused the two Iroquois to believe they had not been observed as they flitted behind the trunks of the trees, and it led them to hold their fire until they believed it could not fail them. But, as we have shown, the vigilant Jed detected his danger on the instant it appeared, and he not only paused, but, bending low, also took to cover. Thus for a brief time the three were securely sheltered.

Hardly had the white man taken this precaution when he made an exclamation of self-disgust. With all his training and experience, he had committed

an oversight which rarely occurred with him, and for which it must be agreed there was no palliation. The lesson that his father had impressed upon him when a boy was that invariably the first thing to do after firing his gun was to reload it.

"Never stir from your tracks or make a move till Old Betsey is loaded and primed," was the homely law of the parent which the son had repeated times innumerable to his friends, until it was known as one of his proverbs.

And yet Jed Stiffens had violated this fundamental rule within the preceding ten minutes. He had discharged his weapon at the Seneca as he was rushing upon him, and then turned and ran without once thinking of reloading his rifle, until he was again brought to bay and confronted, not by one enemy but by two.

"There now! I 'm ready for bus'ness," he muttered, as he poured the powder into the pan of his gun from the narrow neck of the horn and let the clasp down upon it. "If I make such an onspeakable fool of myself agin, I hope I may be shot, skulped, drawn, and quartered!"

Now it will be understood that when two enemies confront each other, with the trunk of a tree serving as a screen at the command of either, there can be slight or no advantage to them; but the situation is decisively changed when one man is obliged to

confront two, for it is generally in the power of the allies so to shift their positions as to gain a fatal advantage over the single opponent. He of necessity must keep the trunk of the tree between his body and the muzzles of his enemies; but if they succeed in separating, so that one gains a position far to the right and the other to the left, this task becomes impossible. Consequently, he must in shifting about place himself within range of one of his enemies.

Such was the situation of Jed Stiffens, or rather such it threatened to become within a very brief while; a still further complication being threatened by the arrival of other Iroquois on the spot at any moment.

The three combatants caught on to the situation at the same moment, and each was on the alert to take instant advantage of the slightest remissness on the part of his enemy.

Let it be stated at this point that neither Jed Stiffens nor either of the Iroquois resorted to the artifice with which doubtless every reader is familiar. The story is that a white man, caught as was Jed, placed his cap on the muzzle of his gun and thrust it just far enough from behind the sheltering tree to catch the eye of his enemy, who instantly fired, and, not doubting that he had slain the white man, leaped into sight with a triumphant shout, only to

be winged by the cunning hunter who had fooled him so cleverly.

Jed Stiffens, we say, did not try this trick, for the reason that he knew there was no possibility of deceiving his enemies by such a transparent fraud, which, if the truth must be told, probably never deceived any one. Most likely the artifice did not present itself to the two Indians, alert to seize any chance; and if it did, they did not wear the right kind of headgear to put it into practice.

However, matters by no means remained at a standstill. Jed was standing close against the shaggy bark, reflecting what a narrow margin was at his command to screen himself from the bullets of his enemies, when again something flickered among the leaves, as if a dun-colored bird had darted through the vegetation. It presented itself some twenty feet to the right of the trunk which sheltered the Iroquois who was on that side of him, and indicated that the warrior had made a swift run to a shelter farther in the direction named. This, it will be noted, widened the space between the two allies, and came nearer than before to bringing the scout within range of both.

"Now it 's *your* turn," muttered Jed, glancing to his left. "S'pose you make a dash for a trunk, and see how purty I 'll wing you!"

He held himself ready to fire, but the second

Indian appeared to be content to stay where he was, since his partner would not have to make more than one more dash to gain the fatal advantage that would quickly bring the singular contest to an issue. Thus Jed was kept busy in watching for a chance at his foes, one of whom was on his right and the other on his left; and since, when they appeared, it would be only for a twinkling, his eyes were continually flitting from one side to the other, his rifle held so as to fire on the instant. Indeed, if he should succeed in winging his man, it would be a proof of his marvellous cleverness, but he was confident of his ability to do the trick.

"There 's only one thing that I don't want them varmints to do," muttered Jed, "which the same is not to make the jump at the same time."

And that is precisely what was done. One of the Iroquois, crouching low, made a lightning-like dash to the right, and precisely at the same instant the second dived to the left. If either succeeded in reaching the screen for which he was aiming, the position of Jed Stiffens would instantly become untenable. In other words, he would be caught so inextricably between two fires that he was certain to fall.

An incredible sequence. Instead of either Iroquois succeeding, both failed!

With a quickness almost too great for the eye to

follow, Joe Stiffens picked off the warrior on his right, and at the same instant his ally on the left emitted a shriek that could have been heard a mile, flung his arms aloft and plunged headlong to the ground as dead as dead could be.

Thus both Iroquois were slain at the same instant, and, since the scout could have had a hand in only one of the exploits, it followed that a friend in need had come forward at the most critical moment.

Without giving expression to his amazement, Jed carried out his precept respecting promptness in reloading his gun, and never stirred from his position until the weapon was again ready for use.

"I war n't lookin' fur neighbors jest at this time," he muttered; "but I seem to have one of 'em that could n't have made his call fit in better than he done. If it 's all the same to him, I 'd like to shake his hand."

The stranger presented himself while the words were on the lips of the scout, and while he was in the act of stepping from behind the tree. Although the day was not yet half gone, it had been full of surprises to the veteran, but none of them equalled that which he now felt when he made the discovery that the friend in need, instead of being one of the scouts attached to General Sullivan's army, or some hunter, was unmistakably a boy!

That he was tall of stature, active, strong, cool,

and a good rifleman need scarcely be said; but his years were so few that no beard as yet showed on his face, which was smooth, rounded, and glowed with the pink tint of health. He was attired in the homespun of the period, with a close-fitting fur cap, a short coat or hunting shirt, gathered at the waist by a girdle made of the same brown material as the garment itself, with powder-horn and bullet-pouch suspended from his neck, breeches of the same coarse, strong, brown cloth as his coat, buttoned at the knee, below which were leathern leggings much the same as are worn by sportsmen to-day, though, instead of moccasins, he had heavy shoes, made of cowhide, and intended for use rather than ornament.

The boy was tall, as has been stated, quite slim, probably because he was not yet done growing, very erect, and a natural athlete, as was shown by his litheness and ease of movement. His features were regular and pleasing, and, when he smiled as he advanced to meet the astonished scout he displayed as fine a set of teeth as ever graced the mouth of a princess.

What added to the perplexity of Jed Stiffens was that the moment he fairly saw the handsome youth he was impressed by something familiar in his looks, and yet could not recall where he had ever seen him before.

But the moment they were within reach of each other they warmly clasped hands.

"I 'm much obleeged to you, younker, for makin' your call jest when you did; fur if you had took a week to fix the minute you could n't have hit it better."

"I 'm glad to meet you, Jed."

"So you know me, do you? That 's more than I can say of you, though there 's somethin' in your looks that reminds me of somebody."

The boy broke into the joyous laughter of youth.

"You don't remember me, eh? Well, that 's funny."

"Funnier for you than me. Who the mischief are you?"

"I sha'n't tell you," replied the lad, still laughing. "Find out for yourself."

"Wal, I 'll do it afore long; but see here, younker, it won't do for us to hang round these parts," added the scout, with quick glances from side to side. "The lattertude here 's rayther too warm for both of us."

"I should n't be surprised if it is. Where shall we go?"

"Foller me, and keep your eyes so wide open that you can't wink."

He started over the general course he had been

following, but had taken only a few steps when he halted abruptly and looked around.

"Is that gun of yourn loaded?"

"Of course it is; I 've never forgotten what you told me about always reloading my rifle the moment it was fired."

"Hain't forgot what I told him 'bout reloadin' his rifle the moment it was fired!" repeated Jed Stiffens, as he resumed his stealthy advance. "When in the mischief did I ever tell him *that?* I don't remember ever havin' seed him afore; but there 's no mistake 'bout his knowin' *me.* Wal," was the self-satisfied thought of the scout, "Jedediah Stiffens is purty well knowed 'mong folks, and it would be strange if more people had n't heered of him than he had of them."

Puzzling as was the question, the scout did not allow it to interfere with his duty. The two were in a perilous position, and nothing was to be thought of until they were extricated; though, as is natural, even in the most critical moments, he was annoyed by his inability to identify his youthful companion.

The latter maintained his position a few paces behind his leader, who was pleased to note the extraordinary woodcraft of the youth. He stepped so softly that the trained ear heard only the faintest rustling of the barely disturbed leaves now and then,

and, when he glanced over his shoulder, he saw that the lad was as watchful and alert as himself.

"Whoever the younker is, he 's used to the woods, and he 's got the right sort of eddycation. Instead of foolin' his time tryin' to larn to read and write, which the same won't never do him any good, he 's studied how to take care of himself when he 's in the woods with the varmints all 'bout him."

Neither spoke until they had gone fully a fourth of a mile. That the scout led the course in the right direction was proven by the fact that not once during this guarded walk were they checked by alarming sight or sound.

Finally, Jed Stiffens, who had been passing over a comparatively level part of the country, parted the undergrowth in front and picked his way with surprising noiselessness through the dense vegetation, passed down an abrupt slope, only several yards in extent, until they reached a small winding brook of crystalline water. A fallen tree was stretched along the bank, and upon this the scout seated himself, making a gesture for his companion to do the same.

"It 's safe for us to stay here awhile, younker."

The smiling youth acted upon the invitation, with the question:

"Why don't you call me by my name, Jed?"

"'Cause I don't know it. Who the deuce are you?"

"Do you give it up?"

"Yes; I can't figger it out."

"Can it be you 've forgotten Jack Ripley?"

CHAPTER VI.

A YOUNG PATRIOT.

THE astonished scout looked keenly into the bright, boyish face at his side, and for a moment did not speak. Then he gave an exclamation of amazement.

"No! that ain't you! Jack Ripley is a little younker, not more 'n knee high to a grasshopper."

"He may have been when you saw him last; but how long ago was that, Jed?"

"Only a little while; you could n't have growed and changed like all this in that time."

"It was four years ago, and I was twelve years old. Don't you remember that it was just after the news of the battle of Lexington that you came over to our house and had a long talk with father? You and he agreed that it was your duty to enlist in the service of your country. You had n't any family, but mother was willing that father should go, though it left her and me alone."

"And you 're that little codger that I took on my knee and told of my adventur's in the French and Injin War? You 're the tiny younker that I

took out in the woods and showed how to aim and shoot your father's rifle!"

"And told me always to make sure of reloading it as soon as it was fired."

"The gun was so heavy you had to rest it on a log, or in the crotch of a tree; but you soon larned to aim straight. Say, now," grinned Jed, "you ain't little Jack Ripley?"

"I am Jack Ripley; but you must remember, Jed, that a boy generally grows a good deal between the ages of twelve and sixteen years,—at least he ought to; and that 's what I 've been doing since you saw me last."

"Stand up!"

Jack promptly rose to his feet. The scout did the same. Standing side by side, there was barely three inches difference in their stature in favor of the elder.

"And you 're only sixteen," remarked Jed, as they resumed their seats. "I 'm more than twice your age. If you keep on the way you 've started you 'll be eighteen and a half feet high by the time you are as old as me."

"But I don't expect to keep on at this rate for many years more; it may be I shall not become any taller,—at any rate not more than a few inches."

Jed Stiffens looked at him admiringly. Little Jack Ripley had always been a pet of his, for he

was not only a bright, plucky, manly fellow, but he was the son of his dearest friend, Horatio Ripley, who away back in the French and Indian War had saved Jed's life during that hideous disaster known in history as Braddock's massacre.

These two men were alike only in their personal bravery, patriotism, and friendship for each other. Horatio Ripley was a graduate of Harvard College, cultured and refined, while Jed Stiffens lacked the ability to write his own name. The two entered the service of their country in the early summer of 1775. It has been shown that Jed's brilliant woodcraft made him the most valuable scout attached to the American army, though the fact that he had attracted the special attention of Washington was probably mainly due to Horatio Ripley, who never let slip an opportunity of befriending his old comrade.

The elder Ripley began his services as lieutenant of the company which he helped to raise. His conspicuous bravery at Trenton and Princeton made him a captain and won the praise of Washington. Brandywine and Germantown brought him a colonelcy, with the certainty that if his life were spared still higher honors awaited him. In fact, the Commander-in-chief manifested a strong personal friendship for the brave and refined officer, whose attachment to his beloved leader led him to decline

several tempting offers for the reason that they would take him from the side of Washington.

All our readers know the history of the "Conway Cabal," which was a conspiracy hatched by an Irish adventurer, Thomas Conway, who was made inspector-general of the army, and was aimed to depose Washington from the chief command and put in his place the conceited General Gates, an Englishman by birth, who received the credit for the surrender of Burgoyne that belonged to Arnold and other subordinates. Conway was desperately wounded in a duel with General Cadwalader because of his course in that discreditable affair, and when he believed himself dying sent a message to Washington begging his forgiveness.

The foregoing is history; but another truthful incident is not generally known, which was that Colonel Horatio Ripley deliberately struck one of the leading officers concerned in the conspiracy with his glove across the face, in order to bring on a duel, which had been refused by note. Though the insult was given in public, it was not resented, and the disgusted colonel pronounced the coward a fair type of all who ever dared to utter a word against Washington.

But this is wandering from the subject, and is recalled for the purpose of showing the kind of stock to which young Jack Ripley belonged. His home was

on the Hudson, so far north of the city of New York that his mother and the servants had not as yet been disturbed by the outrages of war, though they had had several narrow escapes.

Communication between Colonel Ripley and his family was irregular and uncertain, but there was one matter that was never allowed to be forgotten. When his father kissed his wife and boy good-by, the latter asked him to set the time when he should be allowed to shoulder his musket and join the patriots fighting for the independence of their country.

"On the day that you are sixteen," was the reply, "you have my permission to offer your services wherever they may happen to be most needed; but I pray they may not be needed—not so much on your account as for the sake of my country."

Jack Ripley treasured up the pledge, and as the war went on longed for the tardy years to hurry by in order that he might bear his part in the unequal struggle. With the spring of 1779 he began counting the days. So did his patriotic mother, with a solicitude known only to her heavenly Father and herself. When the eventful morning arrived which saw the completion of sixteen years of her son's existence, she took him to her heart, held him there for a minute, kissed him, and with an unfaltering voice, said:

"Go, my dear son, and God go with you! You are my only child, but I cheerfully give up you and my husband, only regretting, as did poor Nathan Hale when he stood at the gallows, that I have no more to offer to my country."

Jack's first intention was to seek out his father, who was with Washington, a long distance down the river in the direction of New York; but he changed his mind for two reasons. In order to reach the American army, he would be obliged to pass through a district infested with Tories, whom his mother dreaded more than the wild Indians. If he should fall into their hands, as was more than probable, she felt that his career would be terminated on its very threshold. Then, too, as has been shown, the main force of the Americans was not actively engaged at that time in any military movement, and the ardent nature of the youth longed for something to do. He dreaded unspeakably lying idle when the fortunes of his country were trembling in the balance.

Well-founded rumors penetrated to the home of Jack Ripley of Sullivan's expedition against the Six Nations. A letter from his father confirmed the news, and he remarked that his old friend, Jed Stiffens, was to accompany General Sullivan, and there could be no doubt that his services would be of the highest value. It was because of these

reasons that Jack Ripley, when he left his home, circled around to the westward of the Hudson until well clear of the territory infested by the Tories, when he changed his course for the Susquehanna, aiming to strike it near the line between New York and Pennsylvania. The letter from his father gave many particulars concerning the campaign, so that his son knew that General Sullivan was advancing northward at the head of a large force, while General Clinton had gone up the Mohawk with the purpose of following the river southward and meeting his superior officer.

"If my birthday had only come a week or two sooner," said Jack, after telling his story to Jed Stiffens, "I should have gone with General Clinton, for you know we don't live very far from Albany."

"I don't b'lieve your father would have cared if you 'd started a little ahead of time," suggested the scout.

"Very likely he would not, and mother told me to do as I thought best; and I did."

"What was that?"

"Obeyed my father. His promise was that when I reached the age of sixteen I should be free to enlist for the war. I reached that age on the eleventh of last month, and that 's the day on which I started."

"You 're a fine younker, Jack, and I 'm proud

of you. The most that I can say is, you 're jest like your father."

"And all I ask is, that your words will prove true," replied the boy, with kindling eyes. "*He 's* my example."

"You could n't have a better one, onless it was Gin'ral Washington,—no, I 'll be hanged if *he 's* any better!"

"We will put them on the same level, Jed."

The scout flung one leg over the other, and with that quick, searching glance which was a part of his nature, and which took in every part of his surroundings, said:

"'Raish Ripley would n't tell a lie to save his life, while I 'd tell five hundred thousand without winkin'. In the days of the old war, me and your father was took prisoners by a party of French and Injins. An officer took a great fancy to your father, as was nateral, and told him if he would say he was a Captain Bridges, that did n't amount to nothin', he would have him exchanged right off, otherwise the Injins that was beginnin' to load up on whiskey would be likely to become ongovernable and tomahawk him. Your father told the officer he 'd see him —— first, or words to that effect. He was Captain 'Raish Ripley, and he spoke it out loud, so that everybody mought hear him. I suggested to the officer that, if it was agreeable to him, I 'd stand

for Captain Bridges or Colonel Washington, as he was then, or for anybody else that would suit him; but the Frenchman had the ill manners to say that the best thing I could do was to stay jest what I was, for I did n't 'mount to nothin', and never would. I 'd like to have had a chance to square matters with that Frenchman 'cording to my promptin's," added Jed, with a grieved air, " but I never got it."

" Yet you both escaped."

" Yas. It war n't long afore Colonel Washington mixed up things so we got a show, and we took it. But, Jack, your father is all right, now that he 's a colonel."

" When was he made a colonel ? " asked the astonished Jack.

" Why, last fall—right after Germantown."

" That 's strange; he never said anything about it in his letters to mother and me."

" And that 's jest like him. If they make him commander-in-chief, as they 're likely to do, if Gin'ral Washington pegs out, it won't make him a bit proud. But let 's keep down to bus'ness, younker. You 've had a long tramp to git here, and I don't 'zactly see how you managed it."

" I had no special trouble. I started with considerable money—not Continental currency that the farmers are so shy of—but British gold. Though I

had to use very little, for when the people along the road found out I was on my way to join the army they were glad to do what they could for me."

"You come all the way on foot?"

"Yes. I might have ridden my pony, but what use would he be in a place like this? Sometimes the houses were so far apart that I had to tramp for two days without seeing one. Once I was three days and two nights on the road without meeting a living person."

"How 'd you manage it?"

"The season was so pleasant that it was no hardship to sleep in the woods, and I found enough fruit to keep me in good condition."

"Where 'd you strike the Susquehanna?"

"I should judge about fifteen or twenty miles to the north. You see, I 'm ahead of General Clinton, but he can't be very far behind me."

"But I don't understand it. You got right in among the Injins, and yet you give 'em all the slip, and then turned round and picked off the varmint that had me to a dead sartinty. How was it, younker?"

CHAPTER VII.

UP A TREE.

JED STIFFENS spoke truly when he said that Jack Ripley was a reproduction in miniature of his father. Among the many admirable qualities he inherited were a fine sense of honor and truthfulness, together with modesty. When, therefore, the scout expressed his wonder at his success in travelling such a long way, the latter of it exposed to the malignant hatred of the Six Nations, and asked him to make clear how it all came about, the youth was embarrassed.

"I don't see anything so remarkable in it. I was n't in any danger until the last day or two, and then I had only to keep my eyes open and dodge whatever peril presented itself."

"It must have took some tall dodgin', for you see what hard work *I* had."

"That was only near here."

"But you was in it too."

"Well, all I have to say is that I picked my way over the ridge, using all the care I could; but I had no idea of running upon you as I did."

"How was it?"

"I heard the report of your gun, and thought it likely that some white man was in trouble, for I could n't see what reason there was for an Indian to use his rifle when so near the army. I set out to find whether I could be of any help, and happened to arrive in time to do you a favor, which I know you would have done for any one caught as you were."

"Of course. I say, when did you eat last?"

"Food has n't been over plenty for the last day or two," replied Jack, with a smile. "I had a few green apples yesterday."

"And they must have been powerful green at this season of the year; the wonder is they hain't give you the gripes."

"I feel quite comfortable."

"Think you could put yourself outside of some cold meat and bread?"

"I should soon show you, if I had the chance."

"Wal, I 'm goin' to give you the chance, younker. When I 'm out on a scout, it is n't safe to shoot at any game, though you may have plenty of chances; so I bring my grub with me."

He slipped his hand within his loose coat, and brought forth a substantial lunch of well-cooked beef and coarse brown bread, wrapped up in common paper, and handed it to the youth.

"If you want to presarve my respect, you 'll not stop chawin' and swallerin' as long as there 's a bit in sight."

"I could n't think of that, Jed."

"Don't want you to think of it. Start in!"

"What about you?"

"I had all I could eat afore I left camp this mornin'."

"And the day is half gone. You must be hungry too; and where will you get your supper?"

"In camp. It ain't fur back, and I 've promised to report to Gin'ral Sullivan to-night. I don't mind goin' three or four days without anything to eat, when there 's a necessity for the same. When there ain't no necessity, I never eat more 'n twice a day, 'cause I feel better for doin' so."

"Since you are determined I shall gorge myself, here goes."

And without knife, fork, or so much as using his jack-knife, Jack Ripley proceeded to make his lunch, and, when he was through, there was hardly a crumb left to brush off his clothing.

"There!" he said, with a sigh of content, "I feel as if I should not want another mouthful for a week."

"Which ain't the way you 'll feel to-morrer mornin'. It 's done me as much good as you to see you eat like a Christian."

"The next thing is this."

With which the youth lay down on his face and drank deeply from the clear, crystalline brook that flowed at their feet. The scout imitated him, when both were ready for business. They had sat for nearly an hour on the fallen tree, conversing, pleasantly, one as glad as the other at this curious meeting that had taken place in the depth of the forest.

But there were two things that were never absent from the brain of the scout. During the most absorbing moments of their chat, he was continually glancing about, and in all directions, on the alert for danger. His sense of hearing was equally awake, and the slightest rustling would have caught his attention. That nothing of the kind occurred was proof that they were safe for the time.

It naturally was different with Jack. When alone and dependent upon himself, he was as circumspect in all he did as the veteran, even though unable to read the almost invisible and inaudible signs around him. But, while in the company of the scout, he forgot the necessity of precaution, and relied wholly upon him.

The second fact that was present with Jed was that he was on duty, and the task that he had set out to perform for himself was still before him. Questioning his young friend convinced him that he

brought no information such as the elder was seeking, and it would have been strange had the lad succeeded in penetrating the plans of the Indians, as they affected the invasion of their territory.

"My promptin's are to climb the ridge and take an observation from the top," remarked the scout, rising to his feet. "What 're yourn?"

"To do as you do. I wish to stick by you, Jed."

"That 's what I expected to hear you say. Afore we start, we must fix on our plan. Have you forgot them signals I teached you when you was a wee bit of a younker?"

By way of answer, Jack emitted several faint, bird-like calls that might have deceived the suspicious ear of a Mohawk or Seneca.

"That 's good. When you hear me give two like this—you will know it means I want you to come to me, and they 'll mean the same if I hear 'em from you. If you catch three of 'em from me, it will mean that the varmints are powerful close, and you must look out for yourself without tryin' to get to where I am. If I make three of 'em twice, it will mean that you are to stay where you happen to be while I try to jine you. I guess that will be 'nough, onless you can think of something else."

"No, I think of none; if there were too many, I should be likely to forget their meaning. I

understand, then, that you are to take one direction and I another ?"

"That 's it. Do you obsarve that oak tree yender, 'bout half a mile off ? The top has been broke off by a stroke of lightnin', and, the bark being mostly gone, the wood looks white and shiny."

The object indicated by the scout was so conspicuous amid the surrounding trees that the pointing of his finger toward it was unnecessary.

"Yes; I see it," replied Jack.

"When you 're through with seein' what you can see, pick your way to the foot of that oak and wait for me. If I 'm done first, I 'll do the same for you."

"Suppose something happens to one of us, so he can't get there ?"

It was a natural supposition, and Jed was pleased at the thoughtfulness of his young friend. The contingency he named was a probable one.

"If you reach the tree first, hang 'round till the sun goes down; don't wait any longer, but git back to the army as soon as you can; hunt out the Gin'ral, and tell him all you know."

"But I shall not know anything to tell him."

"Wal, you can tell the Gin'ral *that*, can't you ?"

"How long will you wait for me ?"

"Till you come."

"Suppose I don't come ?"

" Then I 'll go after you, and find out what 's keepin' you."

The spirited boy smiled at the earnestness of his friend.

" Then, if *you* should happen to be delayed, why should not I go after you ? "

The scout gravely shook his head.

" Don't bother 'bout me; you 'll have all you can do to take care of yourself; likely it 'll be the same with me. There ain't any use of me tellin' you to keep your eyes and ears open. So good-by."

Two minutes later the friends were as invisible to each other as if separated by leagues of forest. Jack Ripley turned back partly over the trail along which they had made their way to the brook in the hollow, while the course of the scout was toward the opposite point of the compass. It will be remembered that the neighborhood was familiar to him, and he was making for a more elevated portion of the ridge, which he was " prompted " to climb, in order to secure an extended survey of the wooded country to the northward. It is unnecessary to say that in the division of the delicate but important work on which the two were engaged, the arrangement was meant to place the chief burden on the veteran.

Alert, vigilant, and watchful, the scout threaded his way through the forest, keeping at the base of

the slope, until opposite the highest portion, when he turned in order to climb to the summit. There, as he knew was the case, the face of the country underwent considerable change. Much of the wood disappeared, and was replaced by stretches of natural openings, some of which were so extensive as to suggest that they had been cleared by woodmen and afterwards abandoned by them. The fertility of the soil was proven by the abundance of grass everywhere.

It need not be explained that such openings were far more dangerous to a man in the situation of Jed Stiffens than was the surrounding forest, since he was liable to be exposed to the shots of one or more invisible enemies.

He neither crossed nor avoided them, but skirted their margins, where the journeying was easier, and he could dart into cover on the first appearance of danger. With his rifle in a trailing position, his shoulders thrown slightly forward, his noiseless step, and his keen eyes flitting to the right and left, he glided along the edge of one opening after another, all the while steadily ascending the slope, which, directly in his front, attained an elevation of three or four hundred feet, and bristled with oaks, beeches, poplars, maples, ash, and the various growths that go to make up an American forest in that latitude. There was less underbrush, so that

travelling continued easy, but the opportunity for a trained woodman to avail himself of effective screen and shelter was always at his command.

Singular as it may seem, nothing had been seen or heard to cause anxiety since his meeting with Jack Ripley. The surrounding forest remained as silent as at "creation's morn," unbroken by the crack of rifle or cry of Indian, bird, or animal; and yet all this being so, it may be said that peril lurked in the very air and vindictive enemies were prowling on every hand.

It was a brief climb to the summit of the ridge, and Jed Stiffens speedily found himself at the foot of the towering oak that had been his objective point from the first. The trunk was several feet in diameter, and the lowermost limbs, as rugged and sturdy as saplings, were but a short distance above his head. The scout slung his rifle over his shoulder, where it was supported by a strong cord fastened in a ring near the muzzle and on the lower side, and tied to the front of the trigger guard. Thus the weapon was out of the way, and he had the free use of his hands.

Spending only a few seconds in peering around and listening, he stooped slightly and then leaped upward with the spryness of a cat. The hand extended above his head seized one of the limbs, and in a twinkling he drew himself among the branches,

in and out of which he passed, on his way to the top, with the facility of a climbing panther. When he paused, he was in the very highest part of the tree, screened by the enveloping foliage, and above the tops of the surrounding trunks. He had selected this forest monarch because of the manifest advantage it gave.

He now carefully adjusted himself, and, parting the leaves in front of his face, leaned outward and surveyed the broad expanse of country spread before him. He was facing northward, studying the region over which it was to be expected that General Sullivan and his army would march within the next day or two. He saw the beautiful winding Susquehanna, dotted here and there by islets, whose green surface made them look like bouquets of vegetation and flowers set in the water. The stream was no broader than a fair-sized creek, and it steadily narrowed to the northward toward its source.

For a number of miles the eye failed to observe the faintest sign of life, but far away in the very horizon, the scout detected something which caused him to draw the small single telescope from his inner pocket and carefully adjust it to his eye. The instrument was a gift from Colonel Ripley, and, despite the remarkable strength of Jed's vision, it had proven of material aid to him in more than one

critical situation, as it was destined to do once more in the present instance.

He spent only a minute or two in scanning the country to the north, when he uttered an exclamation.

"Jest what I thought! There ain't no doubt 'bout it!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A DESPERATE RUN.

FULLY a dozen miles to the northward, where the misty line of forest was dissolved into the soft blue of the horizon, the scout with the aid of the telescope traced fully a score of shadowy lines against the clear sky. They were uniform in appearance, and so faint that when he lowered the glass he was unable to distinguish them.

Turning his gaze behind him, he saw an almost exact reproduction of the vague picture. To the southward, the same almost invisible forms disclosed themselves, but their number was greater.

The conclusion was inevitable: they were the smoke from the camp-fires of his friends. Those to the rear belonged to the main army of General Sullivan; those in front were General Clinton's, on his way to join his superior officer. Both forces had made their noon halt, and the many camp-fires were necessary in the preparation of their meals. It was idle for such bodies of men to attempt to conceal their advance, and in truth no necessity existed for doing so.

Thus Jed Stiffens had located the coming reinforcements of General Clinton. The junction must take place within the next two days, and the discovery of the fact carried with it a still more important one.

Although it was possible, and indeed quite probable, that hundreds of Iroquois were prowling through the country between the forces, yet they would make no attempt to ambuscade, since, if successful, it could avail them nothing. The Indians of necessity would place themselves between two fires, and, if Clinton or Sullivan were caught in a trap, the other would speedily advance to his help and utterly annihilate the assailants. The chiefs and warriors of the Six Nations were too prudent to make such a blunder.

The work of the scout was finished for the day. It only remained for him to descend the oak and report to General Sullivan, to whom the news would be most welcome. Jed had been more successful than he anticipated, and he now paused only long enough to make a quick study of the wood directly around him. So far as he could judge, there was no cause for misgiving.

The task had been completed so quickly that the scout's chief concern was transferred to Jack Ripley. He had penetrated into the more dangerous territory, and was not likely, even if all went well, to

appear at the foot of the oak for an hour or two to come. If he could be notified of the gratifying change of situation, the meeting could be hastened, and a great deal of unnecessary peril to the lad averted.

With this purpose in view, Jed turned back and began threading his way through the wood at a rapid walk. He followed a faintly marked trail, which had been made a long time before by animals in passing to and returning from water. He remembered it well, and knew of several others which converged at the point where the little brook already referred to expanded into a miniature lake or pond.

When there was hope that he had reached a point where the listening Jack could hear him, the scout emitted the clear, bird-like signal agreed upon. Scarcely had it passed his lips when it was answered, but, although the reply was a repetition of his own, and was therefore right in that respect, Jed Stiffens knew on the instant that it had not issued from the lips of his young friend.

"I 'll be skulped! but that is a smart trick!" he muttered, stopping short and peering in the direction whence the signal had come. "If that call was n't made by one of the devilish Six Nations, and most likely a Seneca, then my name ain't Jedediah Stiffens, and my promptin's have all gone wrong."

The scout did not repeat the signal, for the answer that had been wafted back to him through the arches of the forest came from a most uncomfortably near point. In truth, his promptings caused him not only to stop but to turn about and begin a guarded retreat or withdrawal from the neighborhood.

No more than twenty paces were taken, when the signal was heard again, and from a point directly in front—that is (since he had changed his course), from a spot opposite to where the first issued; proof that the calls were made by different persons.

Not doubting for a moment that these signals had reference to him, and that but for the call emitted by himself, which fortunately seemed to have been mistaken by his enemies, he would have walked inextricably into a trap, Jed now broke into his long silent lope, his rifle trailing, and his head thrust forward in his favorite attitude, when making haste through the wood.

Since the last signal was in front, it was clear it would never do for him to continue in that direction. If his memory served him right, there was a forking of these trails a little way ahead, and it would be safe to push on until he reached it.

His memory did serve him right, for, at the very point anticipated, he saw the faintly marked path, into which he bounded, increasing his stride at the

same time to as high a point as was prudent. It will not be forgotten that he had not returned any of the signals emitted in response to his own. To do so would have been to reveal his whereabouts, which it was important he should conceal, while he had nothing to gain by the subterfuge, since he did not know the meaning of the Iroquois calls.

"It looks as if I 've dodged 'bout so as to throw all the varmints behind me," he muttered with considerable satisfaction; "and when the same is the fac' it 's only high-class fun to trot away from 'em. Wal, I ' ll be shot!"

He stopped short, for again the low whistle trembled among the trees, and once more it was in front of him! The Iroquois were becoming more numerous every minute. In truth, the woods were full of them.

It would n't do for Jed Stiffens to turn back, for that would bring him into collision with the enemies from whom he had been fleeing for some minutes past. The only recourse was to change abruptly to the right or left, and abandon the trail altogether; but, instead of doing this, the scout resumed his advance, with moderated pace, directly over the path along which he was loping when checked so abruptly by the last danger signal.

Instead of making the change of direction, the fugitive, as he may be considered, resumed his advance along the path, but at a slower pace than

before. Not only that, but, as he grasped his rifle, and held it in front, ready for use, he answered, for the first time, the signal.

With scarcely a second's interval, it sounded again. The gray eyes of the scout flashed, for he had located the exact spot whence it came.

He now moved forward, slowly and guardedly, and instead of looking directly in front, he peered upward, for he had learned that the call issued not from the ground, but from the branches of a tree. His enemy had perched himself there, apparently with the belief that, if his proximity should be suspected, the white man would not dream that he had taken such a singular position.

The two caught sight of each other at the same moment. Perhaps there was a fraction of a second in favor of the scout, for he thereby gained a fatal advantage, inasmuch, as he had time to shelter himself behind a friendly tree before his foe could aim and fire.

The blunder of the Seneca was in climbing so high, that the diameter of the tree was not sufficient to shelter him. Aware of his mistake, he made a frenzied attempt to scramble a short distance lower, where the broadness of the trunk would screen him from the bullet of his adversary.

He moved nimbly, but the ball of Jed Stiffens was quicker, and, catching him fairly, he emitted a

rasping screech, and the next moment slumped downward, striking the limbs below in turn and sprawling on the ground with a thump that sent his rifle flying a dozen feet from the limp and lifeless body. Without pausing to pick up the weapon, or to notice the inanimate form, the scout broke into a lope again, still keeping to the trail, and running with great speed, though seemingly with no more noise than when walking over the leaves.

"I wonder if there 's any more of 'em," was his thought, as with an impatient exclamation at his forgetfulness, shown a short time before, he abruptly halted and proceeded with quick deliberation to reload his gun. It was easily accomplished within a minute, when he resumed his flight, at a more tardy pace than before.

His acquaintance with the path saved him from any mistake. He knew that a short distance in advance it forked, the main trail continuing to the left, along which he meant to make his way, until, after some windings, he reached the oak where he had agreed to meet Jack Ripley.

An instinctive feeling told him he was not yet "out of the woods," and a few minutes were sufficient to bring proof of the fact. The path made a turn to the right, and just beyond he noted the point where the bifurcation took place, and, at the same time that he observed it he observed also

RED JACKET'S ESCAPE. *Page 83*

the form of a Seneca warrior standing at the parting of the ways and waiting for him!

The sight was a surprise to Jed Stiffens, but a greater one to the Indian, who, apparently, was looking for no such attack. He stood erect, gun in hand, held sloping in front of him, so as to permit its being raised and used on a moment's notice, when the white man burst upon his sight.

The meeting was a startling one to both. Neither made a move to leap to shelter. In a flash, Jed brought his weapon to his shoulder and levelled it at his enemy. The latter, instead of imitating him, wheeled about and ran off with the speed of a deer!

Nothing could have been easier than for Jed to bring him down as he fled in such frantic haste, for of necessity there were several seconds during which he was in plain view before he plunged into the wood and disappeared; but, with his finger pressing the trigger, the scout refrained. When his foe had passed from sight, he lowered his weapon, let down the clumsy hammer with its flint, and shook with silent laughter.

"Why did n't I shoot the dog that was waiting for a chance to shoot me?" he asked himself. "'Cause Gin'ral Washington asked Gin'ral Sullivan to show consideration for Red Jacket, and I reckon I 've done it."

The first glance of the scout at the Indian revealed

his identity, and the rifle of the white man was raised and held in the threatening position in order to frighten the Indian from firing. Had he made a motion to raise his gun, the career of Red Jacket—undoubtedly the most famous member of the Seneca branch of the Six Nations that ever lived—would have terminated then and there.

It cannot be said that the great sachem cut a creditable figure, in thus turning and fleeing for his life from a white man, but it is an unquestionable fact that the incident just narrated was not the first nor the last time that Red Jacket displayed cowardice in the presence of danger.

And yet that extraordinary man was one of the most wonderful of orators. His was the divine gift that enabled him to rouse his warriors to the highest pitch of enthusiasm and, in the words of the poet, to send them into battle and the presence of death "as to a festival."

Jed Stiffens did not stop to moralize over the incident. He was willing to comply with the wishes of Washington, and show consideration for the remarkable sachem of the Senecas, but never to the extent of thereby risking his own safety. So long as Red Jacket could be frightened from committing mischief, he was content thus to frighten him, but that was the furthest extent to which the famous scout would go.

"I guess he must have knowed me," was the self-satisfied conclusion of Jed, "and that 's the reason why he was so scared."

It will be recalled that the two were old acquaintances, and that during the days of peace Jed Stiffens had spent many a night among the lodges of the Six Nations. He understood the lingo of all the tribes, and could converse in Seneca as well as Red Jacket himself.

But the veteran's concern was for Jack Ripley. It was impossible that he should not be in danger, and, reasoning from his own experience, it would seem that the chances were altogether against the youth's escaping the perils by which he must be environed.

Thoughtfully and depressed, the scout made his way to the smitten oak that had been appointed for their rendezvous, but, though he emitted many of the signals that had been agreed upon between them, his straining ears caught no reply, and his straining vision saw no glimpse of the form he longed to see.

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE OCCURRENCE.

JACK RIPLEY did not need to be reminded, when he parted company with his old friend, that he was going into the gravest kind of peril.

Had not Jed Stiffens understood the high-spirited youth so well, he would have permitted nothing of the kind, but would have insisted that he should continue on his way to the camp of General Sullivan without any avoidable delay. But had the scout attempted to order him, it is quite likely that Jack would have reminded him that he possessed no authority, and that no attempt must be made to dissuade him from what he conceived to be his duty.

The lad had learned enough from the conversation with Jed to know that his intention was to ascend some tree upon the summit of the ridge that would give him a survey of the country beyond.

"It is from that direction that General Clinton will come, and there are lots of Indians in that section. It may be my good fortune to make a discovery that it will be worth while to report to General Sullivan."

Thus his errand was of the same nature as his friend's. It was easy to understand why it was better for them to separate than to keep together, for they not only incurred less risk of discovery, but would gain two independent points of observation; or, as Jack viewed it, the prospects of success would be doubled, without, at the worst, increasing the probability of disaster.

The remarkable good fortune that had accompanied him since leaving his home on the bank of the distant Hudson remained for a time longer; for he picked his way for fully a furlong through the wood at the base of the ridge without encountering any enemy, when, from what has been related, it will be understood that there was never a moment that he was free from peril.

When he had traversed the distance named, he concluded it was time to begin the ascent of the slope, in order to secure the best point from which to make his survey. As guarded and careful as he had been from the first, he climbed the moderate elevation, but was disappointed upon reaching the top not to find a suitable tree for his purpose.

Of course, there were plenty of trees, but their height was substantially uniform. He began a search for one that towered so far above the others that there would be no danger of having his view

obscured, but the hunt was exasperating in that he kept it up for a half-hour without success.

The difficulty is apparent to the reader. His weight would prevent his climbing to the very top, since the branches would not support him. Compelled to stop within ten or twelve feet of the summit, he would find his view shut off by the upper branches of some other tree, really no higher than his own.

Finally, he believed he had succeeded when he paused in front of a lofty ash and looked upward among the enveloping branches. It was plain that it was the highest of its fellows, though whether sufficiently so to serve him was uncertain until tested. It was necessary to climb fully twenty feet before reaching the lowermost limb, but that was a matter of small moment to him, except for a difficulty that now presented itself.

His rifle, which had been presented to him by his father two years before, was of a special pattern, and so suitable for his years that he could handle it with ease, but it was unprovided with the cord that served Jed Stiffens so well, when climbing the tree he had selected. If any of my young readers think it an easy thing to work his way up the shaggy trunk of a tall tree, carrying a rifle in one hand, let him make the test, and he will be quickly undeceived.

Jack Ripley stood for some minutes, debating

what was best to do. Common sense would have suggested that the duty he had imposed upon himself was of such trifling account, when Jed Stiffens was similarly engaged at the same time, that he ought to have abandoned it and contented himself with threading his way to the riven oak, and there wait until his friend joined him; but to take this course would be to confess a failure, and the reader will understand how repugnant that was to the son of Colonel Horatio Ripley, who had not yet fairly entered into the military service of his country.

He leaned his rifle against the trunk of the ash, and walked backward a few steps to a position that gave him a good view of the top. A few minutes spent in scrutinizing the upper branches convinced him that the experiment was worth making.

"I think I can work it by holding my gun in one hand, for it won't do to leave it on the ground till I descend——"

Just then an astounding occurrence took place. He had lowered his gaze and started to walk toward the tree, with the intention of making the attempt, when his eyes rested on his weapon, whose stock was on the ground with the top against the trunk of the ash, when a hand darted around the tree and the weapon was silently whisked out of sight.

Only the forearm of an Indian warrior came into view for the instant, and the startling occurrence

was like a piece of magic, not a word being uttered, nor the slightest sound being audible.

But Jack Ripley needed no enlightenment as to what it meant. He stood transfixed, gazing at the point where his gun had vanished, and well aware of the means by which he had been robbed of it. It was useless to attempt to flee, for that would have invited the fatal shot or a pursuit that must end in his quick capture. Nor could he think of offering resistance, since he had only an ordinary pocket-knife in his possession. With feelings of dismay, he awaited the next development in the drama, which was not long in coming.

This was the extraordinary situation when the sharp report of a rifle rang through the woods, fired at some distance from where he was standing. It was the shot of Jed Stiffens which tumbled his crouching antagonist from the branches of the tree, though, of course, his young friend could form no idea of the occurrence.

But the noise acted like a signal to the two Senecas, who immediately stepped from behind the ash and walked toward the youth. It may be stated at this point that the Indians were chiefs of the Seneca branch of the Six Nations, whose names were respectively Ga-yan-quia-ton, or Young King, and Ha-lon-to-wa-nen, or Captain Pollard. In a remarkable document, signed forty-eight years later by

twenty-five chiefs of the Six Nations (Seneca branch), deposing Red Jacket from his sachemship, or chieftancy, the first two names attached to the paper are those we have given, exactly as they are printed. But at the time of the events we have set out to relate the couple were devoted partisans of Red Jacket.

The taller of the Senecas was Young King, and it was he who, after stealing forward with Captain Pollard unperceived, had deftly reached around the trunk of the tree and captured the rifle of Jack Ripley.

His irregular, angular face, daubed with rings of black and red paint as evidence that he was on the war-path, was bisected by a grin, and, shifting the gun of the prisoner to his companion as he advanced, he extended his right, and said in broken English:

"How do, brudder?"

Jack could not well refuse the proferred hand, but it is not to be supposed that there was much cordiality in his clasp or in his reply:

"I am well."

Captain Pollard halted a pace or two behind his comrade, and contented himself with a nod and grin, grunting something which, being in his own tongue, was unintelligible to the distressed youth. The upper part of their bodies was bare, and striped

with black and red paint, but below the hunting-shirt were leggings and moccasins, while the long black hair was gathered and tied in a knot over the crown (a fashion which has almost disappeared within the last half century among the aborigines of our country), in the symbolical form that is said to be a defiance to all enemies, who are invited to take the scalps if they can.

Besides being tied in such a knot, stained turkey feathers were thrust among the coarse hair, thereby adding to the hideous picturesqueness of the red men, who, it may be said, were among the most daring fighters of their tribe.

The present tormenting question with Jack Ripley was as to what his captors intended to do with him. The most natural presumption was that they meant to put him to death, though they seemed in no hurry about it.

Had he been able to regain his rifle, he would have made a fight; but, since such a fight would have been absolutely certain to result in his own death, it was well that he was deprived of all means of defence.

It did not add to Jack's peace of mind to observe that the two Senecas seemed all at once to lose interest in him, for they began talking with each other in an earnest fashion. Captain Pollard indulged in the most gesture, and evidently lost his temper, for

his black, snakish eyes flashed dangerously, and for a moment it looked as if the two were about to come to blows,—a complication for which the youth fervently prayed, since possibly it might have resulted in advantage to him.

That he was the subject of their conversation was certain, and he believed they were disputing as to whether to slay him at once or reserve him for a brief while. If he was correct in this belief, the Iroquois who favored delay carried his point. Young King deliberately drew back the hammer and flint of the rifle of the prisoner, and turning it over shook all the powder from the pan. Then he let down the claw-like hammer and handed the weapon to its owner.

The act of the Seneca had "spiked his gun," so to speak. The charge was still in the barrel, but the piece could not be fired until powder was again poured into the pan, ready to catch the spark from the descending flint. To do that would take so much time on the part of Jack that he would be observed the instant he made the attempt. The gun was returned to him because it suited the whim of his captors to make him carry it. What they had done was equivalent to removing the percussion-cap from the tube of a rifle.

"Go wid me," commanded Young King, who did all the talking to the lad. As he spoke, he

started into the wood, taking one of the faintly marked trails to which we have already referred. Jack unhesitatingly obeyed, and Captain Pollard stepped in behind him, the position of the youth being such that he had no more chance of escaping than if immured in a dungeon a thousand feet under ground.

One fact caused the lad a faint flutter of hope. The course taken by the Seneca was similar to that which Jed Stiffens had followed. It seemed, therefore, that there was a possibility of his friend discovering his helpless situation in time to come to his aid. On the other hand, it seemed certain that the two Senecas were on their way to join a larger party not far off, and if Jed should defer his attempt to help his young friend until then, he would be robbed of all earthly chance of benefiting him at all.

A hundred yards along the trail, and a third Indian appeared, who was breathing hard, as if he had been running fast. When it is added that this new arrival was Red Jacket, and the reader recalls the particulars of his meeting with Jed Stiffens, the cause of his quickened respiration will be understood.

Again there was a halt, and the famous orator held a long talk with his friends, every word being unintelligible to the one most concerned, though

from a close study of the three faces he was confirmed in his belief that the discussion was as to the time when he should be put to death.

Jack did not suspect the identity of the noted sachem and orator of the Senecas, for it was the first time he had ever seen him. Red Jacket gained the name by which he is remembered from a brilliant crimson waistcoat with which he was presented, and of which he was so fond that he managed at all times during peace to possess one; but he laid it aside when on the war-path, and there was nothing in his dress and appearance to distinguish him from his brother chiefs.

The discussion had not continued long when the watchful Jack Ripley, who stood a pace or two back, with folded arms, closely watching all three, saw clearly that the dominant member of the trio was the last arrival—that is, Red Jacket. The other two appealed to him, and several times when he replied, both nodded their heads to signify that they acquiesced in his decision. He talked much less than either, but his words had more weight than both.

These facts caused the youth to study the sachem more closely. He noticed that though he was unmistakably a full-blooded Indian, he possessed Caucasian features. While he wore his hair like the rest of his people, yet his forehead was high

and remarkably well developed. His nose was rather large and slightly Roman in form, and the eyes were unusually brilliant, even for an Indian. He displayed a peculiarity that was noted all through his life, — that of looking intently into the eyes of the person addressing him. The contour of the face was symmetrical, the mouth and chin all that could be desired, while his stature was perhaps two or three inches less than six feet. He was lithe, graceful, well formed, and since his age at that time was under thirty years, it will be understood that he formed an exceedingly attractive looking Indian.

The discussion was briefer than Jack Ripley expected. He saw the leader say something, when he immediately compressed his thin lips and nodded emphatically first to the one on his right and then to him on his left. They nodded in reply to signify that they accepted the decision. Then Young King turned to Jack Ripley and announced it to him:

"Brudder must die—go wid us—me take gun."

"Why must I die?" asked the youth, looking into the face of the tall warrior, as he handed his weapon to him.

"Red Jacket say so—Red Jacket great sachem—we his children."

CHAPTER X.

AN ASTOUNDING OCCURRENCE.

IT was the first knowledge that came to Jack Ripley of the identity of the sachem who had sentenced him to death. Despite the melancholy nature of the words that had just been spoken, he turned and looked at the famous Seneca, whose name he had often heard, with feelings akin to wonder and admiration.

Red Jacket had fixed those piercing black eyes of his upon the face of the youth, as if he saw something of peculiar interest in the handsome countenance. The gaze of the two met, and for several seconds they stared unflinchingly at each other. Jack's arms were folded, his head thrown back, and he must have been an accurate picture of his father at the same age. There was no embarrassment in his manner, though he was considering the question whether it was worth his while to make an appeal to the sachem, who, he knew, was an old acquaintance of his parent.

Slight as was the hope offered, it is probable Jack would have disclosed his identity and made the

appeal but for the unexpected action of Red Jacket. Turning to Young King, he said something in his native tongue. That chief in turn addressed Jack Ripley:

"Be you son of Colonel Ripley?"

What an amazing question! Red Jacket had not only surpassed Jed Stiffens in recognizing the resemblance of the son to his father, but he knew the rank of that father in the American army,—a knowledge that had come to the son only an hour or two previous.

"Tell Red Jacket I am the son of his friend, Colonel Ripley," was the proud response of the youth, his arms still folded, one foot thrust slightly forward, and his head thrown back.

When the words were translated to the sachem, his black eyes flashed and his whole frame quivered with rage. He spoke rapidly to Young King for several minutes, but the latter did not deem it necessary to interpret all he said.

"Big lie—Colonel Ripley no friend ob Seneca!—he bad man—where he be?"

"He is not a bad man, Seneca!" replied Jack, with heaving breast. "He is worth a thousand Red Jackets! He is fighting for his country, and when he takes a prisoner he treats him like a Christian. He has been the friend of Red Jacket, and given him food and taken care of him when he

JACK RIPLEY AND RED JACKET. *Page 98.*

was drunk like the dog he is! Let him not mention the name of my father again!"

All this was made clear to the sachem, who was literally struck dumb for the moment by the daring of the youth. Red Jacket was still holding his rifle in one hand, and he suddenly laid the other upon the tomahawk at his girdle, as if about to snatch it forth and bury it in the head of the boy who had not shrunk from defying him to his face. But if such was his inclination, he restrained himself, and stood like a statue, looking across the brief, intervening space into the countenance of the youth, who returned his gaze without quailing. Not for the sake of a hundred lives would Jack Ripley cringe at the feet of that barbarian.

Young King still retained the rifle of the youth, to whom, under the circumstances, it would have been useless. Withdrawing his penetrating gaze from the face of the prisoner, Red Jacket said something to him which evidently was a command, for the chief turned to Jack and, with a slight inclination of his head, said:

"Come!"

Again the Seneca led, the captive walking closely behind him, while Captain Pollard came next, Red Jacket bringing up the rear.

The walk continued for more than a hundred yards, when the party debouched into an opening

of less than an acre in extent. Covered with a rank growth of grass, it was devoid of trees, rocks, boulders, and stones, and as level as the floor of a house. If a natural opening, it was one of the most striking to be found in that part of the country.

Evidently the great Seneca orator had a poetic eye, for his manner indicated that he had selected this spot for the "last scene of all" for his prisoner.

It would be idle to attempt to give the thoughts of Jack Ripley, which were of a solemn and distressing nature. He had abandoned hope, but, like his brave father, he was too proud to sue for mercy, even when it might seem there was a possibility of its being granted. He had endeavored, under the instruction and training of his noble parents, to live a clean, manly life, acceptable to his heavenly Father, to whose will he was ready at all times to bow without murmuring.

Young King stood several paces to the right, Captain Pollard to the left, while midway between, and slightly advanced, Red Jacket faced the youth, who stood perhaps a dozen feet distant, his arms again folded, one foot advanced, and his head erect. The pose was perfect as expressive of absolute fearlessness in the presence of death.

An impressive hush rested upon the surrounding forest, as if nature were in sympathy with the dreadful scene.

Once more fastening his burning gaze upon the pale face of Jack Ripley, Red Jacket began speaking. His voice was low, though his whole frame seemed tremulous with suppressed emotion. Not a word, of course, was intelligible, but Jack believed the chief was denouncing him and his parent, and it was this belief that ruffled the feelings of the youth when he should have been calm, thoughtful, and resigned. Had he been assured that his suspicion was correct, he would have interrupted the sachem with words of burning indignation.

They would have produced their effect, too, for it is a fact that although Red Jacket scorned to make use of the English language, except brokenly and under exceptional circumstances, he readily understood what was said to him in that tongue.

The Seneca had spoken a few minutes only when he hesitated, and then suddenly raised his voice and delivered the following extraordinary address, which, as will be perceived, was directed not to the prisoner, but to Young King and Captain Pollard:

"Brothers, the palefaces who came across the great water are like the leaves on the trees and the stars in the sky. They are pressing hard the red men, who are the loved children of the Great Spirit; but they shall rally and drive back the palefaces into the deep water.

"Brothers, not all the palefaces are evil. There

are some who do not speak with a double tongue. It is true they are few, for they are only so many (holding up the fingers of one of his hands).

" Brothers, there is one who is the friend of Sa-go-ye-wat-ha. When he was hungry, his white brother gave him food; when he was thirsty, and his blood was a red fire in his body, the white man held the cup of cold water to his lips; when Sa-go-ye-wat-ha was ill and weak, he made a soft couch for him, and Sa-go-ye-wat-ha slept with sweet dreams like the pappoose on the breast of its mother.

" Brothers, do you ask the name of the white man whom the Great Spirit loves, and to whom the heart of Sa-go-ye-wat-ha is always open? It is Colonel Ripley, who fights for his country, but does not make war upon the Six Nations, because he knows they are fighting for their homes, nor does he kill our women and children.

" Brothers, Colonel Ripley is not with General Sullivan, who is marching against our villages, and means to burn our homes and crops, and kill our people. Colonel Ripley is far away, and has never harmed a red man.

" Brothers (pointing to Jack Ripley), he is the son of Colonel Ripley, the friend of Sa-go-ye-wat-ha. Not a hair of his head shall be touched! He shall be set free, and when it shall be told to Colonel

Ripley what Sa-go-ye-wat-ha has done, his heart will be glad, and he will know that if Sa-go-ye-wat-ha smites his friends in his anger he does not forget the white man who speaks with a single tongue, who gives Sa-go-ye-wat-ha food and drink, and is his friend.

"Brothers, let the words that Sa-go-ye-wat-ha has spoken be made known to the son of Colonel Ripley."

Now, if the reader deems several statements that follow incredible, we beg him to "suspend judgment" until all is made clear.

It need not be said that Jack Ripley was unable to understand a word of the foregoing speech. The reader will then naturally ask how it came to our knowledge. The answer will shortly be given.

Furthermore, though the youth had no knowledge of Seneca, he had a strong and well-founded suspicion of the import of Red Jacket's words; and this was not gleaned from the looks and manner of the dusky orator, which would seem to be the only possible clew, but from a totally different source.

When this declaration is made, the indulgent reader will suspect us of trifling with his credulity; but let him be assured we are not. Jack Ripley was the possessor of an astonishing secret, which interpreted the words of the Seneca and made clear the cause of their utterance.

Still more, the youth carried that secret for a

number of years in his breast, never hinting it even to his trusted friend, Jed Stiffens. When the time arrived for making it known, he told the astounding story to General Washington at Mount Vernon, and that great man did not attempt to conceal his astonishment.

If Jack Ripley could carry this secret for years, we beg the reader to wait until we have proceeded somewhat further with our narrative, assuring him that everything shall be made plain before the closing paragraph is reached.

An Indian is trained to repress his emotions in the presence of others, but neither the stoicism nor the paint on the faces of Young King and Captain Pollard could hide their feelings at the complete change of front of their leader. Had he been any one else, it is not improbable that they would have revolted, and refused to submit to such an unprecedented decision. But the sway of the wonderful orator over them was absolute. Nearly a half-century passed before they rebelled to the extent that they attached their names (or rather their marks) to the paper which deposed Red Jacket from his chieftainship.

In his imperious manner, the orator directed Young King to return the rifle of Jack Ripley to him. Obeying also the order uttered a brief while before, the chief said:

"You be free—Seneca no hurt—but, damn!"

The indignant Seneca could not wholly restrain his indignation. Despite all the youth could do, he laughed. The rebound from despair to hope was so complete that doubtless it had much to do with his mirth, but the expression of disgust on the face of Young King when he passed his weapon back was what stirred the risibilities of Jack, who now did something which deserves record among the apparently incredible statements already made.

The youth, as he took his favorite rifle, bowed gracefully, and thanked the Seneca. Then he turned to Red Jacket, whose attitude and pose was strikingly graceful, and suggestive of that taken by the youth himself a short time before.

The sachem kept his gun with him, and grasping the barrel near the muzzle so as to hold it upright while the stock rested on the ground, he took a single step backward, as if recoiling from some object, but holding himself proudly erect, with his left hand on the tomahawk at his girdle, he bent his burning gaze upon the youth to whom he had just given back his life.

As he had done several times before, Jack Ripley met that gaze with one as fixed and dauntless. A smile still lingered on the boyish countenance and, looking straight in to those basilisk-like orbs, he deliberately winked at Red Jacket!

CHAPTER XI.

A PARTY OF FRIENDS.

NOW that Jack Ripley was restored to hope and safety, and once more felt the grasp of his reliable rifle, he was embarrassed as to his next step. He did not fancy turning his back upon Red Jacket and walking off, as he felt at liberty to do, for he believed the opportunity would prove too tempting for the treacherous Senecas to resist. He therefore decided to wait, for the time, where he was.

Staring straight into the fierce, dignified face of Red Jacket, the audacious youth had winked at the terrible sachem, of whom FitzGreene Halleck afterward wrote:

"Who would believe that, with a smile whose blessing
Like the patriarch's might soothe a dying hour,—
With voice as low, as gentle and caressing,
As e'er won maiden's heart in moonlit bower,—

"With form like patient Job's, eschewing evil,
With motions graceful as a bird in air,—
Thou wert in truth the veriest devil
That e'er clenched fingers in a captive's hair;

" That in thy veins there flows a fountain
Deadlier than that which bathes the upas tree ;
And in thy wrath a nursing cat o' mountain
Is calm as a babe's sleep compared to thee."

The act of the youth was a stupendous insult to the majesty of the orator of the Senecas. It was impossible that he should not have seen it, and he did the only thing possible,—ignored it.

The strained situation had lasted hardly a minute when three white men suddenly presented themselves, two issuing from the wood on the left, while the third emerged from the right. The last was Jed Stiffens, and the action of his friends was so timed that it was clear they had obeyed a signal from him.

The other two were Jo Ellers and Wade Mills, brother scouts of Jed, whose coming, it will be admitted, could not have been more timely. Had their arrival been in these days, the situation would have been described by saying that Jed and his friends " had the drop " on Red Jacket and *his* friends; for each white man held his unerring rifle half-raised in front and grasped with both hands, in which position he could bring it to a level and fire on the instant, anticipating the greatest possible dexterity on the part of their enemies.

Red Jacket started with a frightened exclamation when he observed the three men as they came out from among the trees. He made as if to use his

gun, but fortunately changed his mind, for, had he persisted, Jed Stiffens would have shown him the "consideration" which, as he remarked to General Sullivan, he would show the Seneca leader whenever the occasion warranted it.

Young King and Captain Pollard displayed more self-possession, but the proof that they were at the mercy of their deadly foes was anything but comforting. They were caught in the open, and so surrounded that they knew better than to make the first move toward flight or resistance. They stood sullen and glowering, stoically awaiting whatever doom their masters had in store for them.

"Don't harm them," called Jack Ripley. "I was a prisoner, but Red Jacket spared my life, and gave me back my gun, as you can see."

"I 've obsarved the same," replied Jed, halting a few paces distant. "And me and my pards arriv in time to catch that speech of Red Jacket. By gracious! but it was a roarer! He 's the greatest chap in that line that lives! He said some mighty nice things 'bout your father, the Colonel."

"I 'm glad to know that," replied the lad, who refrained from mentioning that the sachem had talked very differently a short time before.

"I 'll never forget that speech as long as I live. I can repeat every word of it, and when there 's a good chance I 'll do it for you."

This remark will make clear to the reader how it was that the speech of Red Jacket came to be preserved. For Jed Stiffens spoke the truth when he declared he would never forget a word of it. It lingered in his memory for years, and he repeated it many times to the admirers of the wonderful orator, some of whose speeches have become a part of the literature of our country.

Jed now lifted the strain by addressing himself directly to Red Jacket, as the leader of the Senecas:

"Drop that gun of yourn quicker 'n lightning!"

The command was uttered in English, and that the sachem understood the order was proven by the promptness with which he loosened his grasp on the weapon and allowed it to tumble over on the ground. The act was not without a certain dignity, though it revealed the timidity of the Seneca.

"Likewise, Young King, you 'll do the same."

The chief's obedience was fully as ready as that of his leader.

"And, Captain Pollard, you 'll foller suit."

The third Seneca was sullen, and hesitated to part with his most effective means of defence. The rifle of Jed Stiffens was at his shoulder in a flash.

"Hang your eyes! Drop that gun, or I 'll blow you to kingdom come!"

Captain Pollard bounded backward as if he had heard the warning of a rattlesnake at his feet, the

rifle toppling over a couple of paces in front of him.

"That 's the way to do it! Now, git, all of you!"

Red Jacket led the procession across the open space, and his tread had the majesty of a conqueror, slow, deliberate, and uniform, as if he were walking to his throne from which to issue his royal commands to his subjects. Young King was only two or three paces behind him, but Captain Pollard, who had dared to hesitate, seemed to be in a shiver from the scare caused by the levelled weapon of Jed Stiffens. Instead of taking his place with the composure of his companions at the rear, he made a sudden dash for the shelter of the wood, running by both of them.

His action took him within arm's reach of Jo Ellers, standing at present arms. That scout wheeled as the Seneca was passing, and, concentrating his tremendous strength in his good right foot, aimed a terrific kick at the retreating chief, which, had it landed, must have lifted him clear of the ground and sent him sprawling on his face.

But Jo slightly miscalculated, and, missing his aim by a hair's breadth, his foot shot high in air, raised him from his balance, and dropped him on his back with a resounding thump that was audible for several rods. Captain Pollard did not look around, but, plunging into the wood, vanished, as may be

said, in the twinkling of an eye, while the friends of Jo, including Jack Ripley, broke into laughter.

"Hangnation!" exclaimed the scout, climbing to his feet. "If that kick had landed, it would have h'isted Captain Pollard among the tree tops. Jed, why did you let them two go?" he asked impatiently of Stiffens.

"'Cause they b'longed to the party of Red Jacket. They did n't do any harm to the younker here, which I beg the favor of introdoocin' to you as Jack Ripley, the son of Colonel Ripley, the finest man that ever lived 'ceptin' Gin'ral Washington, and he 's jest as good as him. Jack, this is Jo Ellers and Wade Mills, two of the loafers b'longin' to Gin'ral Sullivan's army, which I 'm tryin' to teach 'em a little sense, though I find it mighty hard work."

The youth warmly shook the hands of the two scouts in turn, expressing his pleasure at meeting them.

"I thought you were to wait at the oak for me," remarked Jack, turning to Jed.

"You know what I told you; I was to stay there as long as I oughter, and then I said I 'd set out to hunt you up."

"How long did you wait?"

"Must have been ten minutes at least," was the reply.

"I fancied you had more patience than that."

"I knowed you would run your head inter trouble, and what 's the use of my hangin' round without doin' anything?"

"Your arrival was as timely as mine when you were trying to dodge two Iroquois."

"Yas," remarked Jed, thoughtfully; "but there war n't no need of my comin', fur Red Jacket made up his mind to let you go afore I showed myself. It was a qu'ar piece of bus'ness for him."

Jack Ripley looked keenly at his friend, suspecting his words were intended to veil his meaning from him and his companions. But the one searching glance of the youth told him such was not the fact, and Jack wondered that it was so.

"Strange that he does n't know," thought the lad. "Well, I shall not tell him,—at least not for the present."

Thus it was that Jed Stiffens never learned Jack Ripley's secret until years afterward.

"I obsarve that your gun is n't loaded, Jack," said the veteran, with a reproving glance at the weapon in the hands of his young friend.

"Your eyes deceive you for once, Jed. There is a full charge in the barrel."

"But there ain't no powder in the pan."

"May I be permitted to explain?"

"You may try it."

Jack thereupon related how, when the weapon was taken from him, Young King had emptied the powder-pan. The scout listened gravely and shook his head.

"Sev'ral minutes has passed since the gun was give back to you."

By way of reply, the youth drew back the hammer with its clawed flint, and, unstopping the neck of his powder-horn, poured the black grains into the pan, making sure that some of them percolated through the vent-hole, so as to communicate with the powder nestling behind the bullet.

"There!" said Jack, "the gun is now ready for service. I hope by the time I am as old as you that I will remember as well as you do."

"If you don't remember any better, you 'll never live to grow another half-inch."

"How 's that?" asked the astonished Jack, while the others looked inquiringly at their leader.

"I furgot to reload my gun twice to-day, like the blamed fool I am!" he exclaimed, unwilling to receive unmerited credit.

The announcement was too overwhelming to permit the others to think of suitable comment, therefore they remained mute.

Each of the three men had appropriated one of the captured weapons, so that, with the exception of Jack Ripley, all were doubly armed. Naturally,

Jed Stiffens came into the possession of Red Jacket's property, and he turned it over and examined it with considerable interest. It was an unusually fine rifle, silver mounted, and in the best condition.

"A present from some infarnal fool that has faith in Red Jacket," was his comment. "They don't know him as well as me."

Jack Ripley could not help saying:

"General Washington holds him in esteem."

"Which goes to show he don't know much about him."

"My father had always been a friend of Red Jacket."

"Wal, if *he 's* his friend, I 'll take back all I said. But I say, younker, have you heard the 'pinion of the Colonel lately ?"

"I could not, for he has been away from home for several years, and has never referred to Red Jacket in his letters."

"Then you don't know nothin' 'bout the 'pinion of the Colonel, and if you 'll take the advice of a friend you won't be quite so free in tellin' your elders what the 'pinion of the Colonel happens to be on var'ous matters."

The gravity with which these words were uttered gave them an irresistible drollery. Jack slapped the scout on his shoulder and mollified him with the remark, if indeed he needed mollifying:

"All right; we 'll wait till we hear father's views from his own lips."

The party felt so secure in their situation that they remained some time in conversation, though they changed their precise location to the edge of the wood, and none of the men forgot to listen and watch for the signs that might appear at any moment.

Jed Stiffens related his experience to Jack Ripley, as it had been during their comparatively brief separation. The cowardice shown by Red Jacket would have been hard to believe had the instance named been the first known, but Jo Ellers and Wade Mills spoke from their own knowledge when they declared it to be precisely what they expected.

"The danger from that chap," was the comment of Jo, "ain't what he does himself, but what he rouses others to do. The Iroquois have got some powerful smart speakers, like Cornplanter, Little Billy, and a lot of others, but there ain't none that can hold a candle to Red Jacket when he lets himself out."

Thereupon Jed Stiffens repeated the address of the sachem as he made it in his own tongue when confronting Jack Ripley, who had given over all hope of escaping with his life. The youth was impressed with its rude eloquence, but he would have been still more impressed had he known less of the

orator, and had he not possessed the secret which was yet unsuspected by the shrewd scout who, in his particular line was without a superior, and indeed had few equals.

CHAPTER XII.

GENERAL SULLIVAN'S CALLERS.

NIGHT had once more descended on the armed host that was steadily pressing northward along the upper Susquehanna, on its way to the doomed towns of the Iroquois, who were running to and fro and making what hurried preparations they could to check and turn back the avenging army, that could be neither halted nor swerved from its stern purpose of chastising the merciless hordes that had already been spared too long.

A mild summer night, with the full moon riding high in the clear heavens, a gentle breeze stealing through the forest and rippling the beautiful river, whose banks witnessed such a scene as they had never before known.

The myriad of boats that all day had been dragged and poled up-stream with their freight of artillery and supplies were moored to shore; the galloping officers had dropped from their saddles, and their tired animals were munching the succulent grass that was so plentiful that scant draughts were made upon the reserve of hay and oats; the bands

whose martial strains had stirred the echoes among the forest arches were silent, but the thousands of soldiers were moving to and fro, or pausing here and there for jest, or song, or conversation, or to partake of the food that was being prepared at fully a hundred twinkling camp-fires. All were in high spirits, for they had unlimited confidence in the strength of their numbers, they trusted their leader and their officers, and it had become known that General Clinton, with fully a thousand more soldiers, was within a few miles, and the two armies were steadily drawing near each other with every passing hour of the day. When united, their number would be nearly five thousand, which was more than three times the force that the Six Nations could put in the field. What cause could there be for misgiving ?

But General Sullivan, had he been disposed to be careless, could not have been so with the impressive warning of Washington lingering in his ears. His scouts were on duty day and night; he never waited until darkness before going into camp, and he selected his ground with the utmost care. Double guards were placed, and, in short, every possible precaution that prudence could suggest was taken to prevent their watchful and vigilant enemy from gaining any advantage.

As was the custom, the tent of General Sullivan

was pitched near the river, in which he and several of his officers had spent a half-hour in bathing, just as the sun was setting. He had held a conference with them after the evening meal, and was still chatting informally when the orderly made known that Jed Stiffens and a friend were waiting outside the tent.

Rarely was such a request refused, for General Sullivan appreciated the value of the famous scout, who never intruded upon him without bringing information that was well worth his attention.

Jed and his companions had reached camp two hours before, and it was the veteran who brought the news of the proximity of General Clinton and his force. He had made his report to the commander, whom he told of the arrival of the son of Colonel Ripley, who had offered himself as a volunteer in the patriot army. The commander asked Jed to bring the young man to his tent after supper, which was what Jed and the youth desired. Consequently, the present call was by appointment.

The interior of the tent was wholly devoid of furnishing, except with a few articles of the officer's personal luggage, and, as before, it was lit up by the burning wood in the centre. There was not even a camp chair, and a heavy blanket spread on the bare earth was all that served for a bed; but it was easy to produce several pieces of logs or large

bits of wood, which served quite well for seats. The mildness of the weather, the general sense of security, and the excellent health of the command, kept all in good spirits, and averted everything in the nature of hardship or suffering.

When the handsome youth followed the scout into the general's tent, and made his military salute, the officer rose and warmly clasped his hand.

"I assure you, my lad, that I have the greatest pleasure in greeting the son of my valued friend, Colonel Ripley,—one of the best officers in the army. I have heard of you as a worthy son of a worthy father."

No words could have pleased Jack Ripley more than these, which impressed him as in the best of taste, as did everything that was complimentary to his parent. The ruddy firelight could not hide the flush that mantled the winsome countenance of the youth as he thanked the officer for his sentiments, and accepted his invitation to seat himself on a bit of stump at his side, the grinning Jed Stiffens doing the same across the tent, and quite content to listen to the conversation of the two, rarely injecting anything unless invited to do so.

"I am told that you have the consent of Colonel Ripley to volunteer in the service of your country?"

"Yes, sir. I should hardly dare offer myself without such consent. I am a little more than a

week over sixteen years of age, and my mother was willing that I should leave home on the morning of my birthday."

"As I said, it is only what one would expect who is acquainted with your father, whom you favor very much in looks."

"I should much rather favor him in my mental and moral qualities."

"There can be no doubt that the resemblance is as close in the one as in the other. Well, now, do you wish to begin as lieutenant or captain?"

Jack looked in surprise at General Sullivan, but the twinkle of his dark eyes showed he was jesting. Encouraged thereat, the youth said:

"Is there any objection to my beginning as colonel?"

"Yes."

"What is it, sir?"

"It would hardly be fair to your father, who had to go through many years' service in order to reach that position. How would you feel to come out of the war as major-general while he was but a brigadier?"

"I did not think of that. No doubt he would grieve, and therefore it cannot be thought of. The safer plan will be to commence as private."

"Howsumever," interjected Jed Stiffens, "the colonel begun as lieutenant, and a mighty good one

he was, too,—but that was 'way back in the old French and Injin War."

"You must have been a small boy when your father left home."

"I should say so," remarked Jed; "so small that I did n't know him when I met him in the woods to-day; but, little as was the chap, the colonel used to drill him as he did his men in the war."

General Sullivan looked pleased, and said inquiringly to Jack:

"Have you remembered what he taught you?"

"I think so; try me."

The youth came promptly to his feet in the middle of the tent, and, straightening up, the commander proceeded to put him through the manual of arms. In those days, and indeed down to the war of 1812, the American army had no regular system of tactics. It is a historical fact that General Winfield Scott was obliged to translate a French instruction book, and drill his officers like common soldiers; but the earlier war was a West Point to the older officers of the Revolution. General Sullivan was too young to take part in the events of more than a score of years previous, but, as has been stated, he was a major of militia when appointed to command by Congress, and possessed good military knowledge.

His test of Jack Ripley, therefore, was thorough. He called out the commands sharply, and the lad

went through them all correctly and without mistake or hesitation.

"Good!" exclaimed the General, slapping his knee as he settled back to his former position of ease. "So far as knowledge of the manual goes, you are fitted to drill any company I have. A few months' campaigning will harden and steady you, and I have not the remotest doubt that you will win honor under the flag of your country."

"Thank you," replied the blushing Jack, resuming his seat. "I shall certainly do the best I can; but I do not want any office,—only a chance to help things along."

"It is just such fellows who make the best kind of officers. Captain Wells is one of the finest we have in the service. I will turn you over to his care to-morrow, and I am sure you will like him."

During this conversation, Jed Stiffens was silent, though deeply interested, as he now showed.

"Gin'ral, I like very much what you have said, and it 's plain that the younker does likewise; but it 's in my mind to ask you a favor."

"You know that it will give me pleasure to do anything I can for such a faithful fellow as you."

"Which the same is this: don't put Jack into the ranks for a few days."

"Why not?"

"I want him to help me in scoutin' till the time

comes to strike the Iroquois. Why, he 's a born scout!" exclaimed Jed with a vigorous gesture. "He takes to it as nat'ral as duck to water; there 's some big work to be done in the next few days, and though we 've got plenty of good chaps like Jo Ellers and Wade Mills, yet I 'd rather have this younker with me than any of 'em."

The surprised General looked at Jack with the question:

"How does that suit you?"

"Jed and I are old friends, and if you have no objection I shall be glad to serve with him for a time."

"Then it is settled."

At this moment the orderly made an astonishing announcement.

"An Indian asks the favor of speaking with General Sullivan."

The three looked at one another with amazement. Jack Ripley showed his good breeding by instantly rising to his feet.

"Then, Jed, we will retire."

The scout imitated him, but General Sullivan raised his hand.

"I am likely to need you, Jed, as interpreter, and I shall be pleased to have you both remain. Be seated. Orderly, show the visitor in."

The next moment a Seneca Indian in his war-

paint, with knife and tomahawk in his girdle, but without rifle, stalked into the firelit enclosure. He made a military salute to the General, but did not seem to see the other two, who watched him curiously as he accepted the hand of the officer, who rose to his feet.

"I am glad to meet you, my brother. Are you a chief of your tribe?"

"Why, Gin'ral," said the amused Jed Stiffens, forgetting that Sullivan had never seen the caller before, "that 's Red Jacket!"

The officer's amazement increased. His first thought was as to how this distinguished representative of the Six Nations had managed to penetrate the lines to his tent; but he quickly reflected that that could be done readily by one without the countersign, since he had but to make known his errand to the outer sentinels, who, following the prescribed rule, would conduct him to the presence of the commanding officer, taking due precaution against his doing harm.

Red Jacket's visit was in spirit a call under a flag of truce, though no such emblem was displayed. He was not blindfolded, since there was a purpose in permitting him to see with his own eyes the strength of the force invading his country.

"Red Jacket, I welcome you!" said the General, shaking his hand again, and waving him with

courtly grace to a seat beside him. The savage accepted the invitation with dignity, uttering the formula of those of his people who possess but a slight knowledge of English: "How do, brudder?"

"My health could not be better. I hope no harm has befallen my great and good brother, Red Jacket, sachem of the Senecas."

"The Great Spirit loves His children who are the red men."

General Sullivan looked curiously in the face of his visitor, for he did not understand a word of what was addressed to him. Then he turned to the grinning Jed Stiffens, who translated the remark. Thenceforward the few interchanges of sentences were made through the scout.

"The Great Spirit will love His red children better if they will stop murdering the women and children of the palefaces," said Sullivan, who was in no mood to mince matters with the visitor, whose oratorical genius had done much to excite the Iroquois to their manifold outrages.

"It was the white men who first slew the women and children of the Iroquois. It was they who came across the deep water and stole the hunting-grounds of the red men. They were thieves and murderers."

"Well, Red Jacket, that has been gone over hundreds of times before; we will not waste words in doing it again. I will admit that many of my

people have used yours badly, but the people who did that were not those who lived at Wyoming and Cherry Valley."

The reproof was a keen one, but it failed of its mark, since no American Indian can be persuaded to see that it is not right for him to retaliate upon innocent persons the sins of the guilty whom he cannot reach. Since the grievances of his people were against the whites, their manifest duty was to strike all the whites they could, even though most of them were not born at the time the offences were committed.

General Sullivan was invading the country of the Six Nations as a conqueror, and he did not mean to submit to any berating from the tongue of even so prominent a representative as the head sachem and orator of the Iroquois.

"You have come to my tent, Red Jacket, and I receive you with the kindness I endeavor to show all my guests. But some business brings you hither, and I should like to learn what it is."

Although these words spoken in English were clearly intelligible to Red Jacket, he waited until Jed Stiffens had translated them. Then, with the same deliberation, he dictated his reply to the demand of the General. The scout started to interpret it for the officer, but had hardly begun to do so when he stopped, threw back his head, and broke into uproarious laughter.

CHAPTER XIII.

NIGHT IN CAMP.

RED JACKET'S reply to the brusque demand of General Sullivan was thus interpreted by the scout, Jed Stiffens:

"The chief says he has a fine rifle that was presented to him by Sir William Johnson jest afore his death, five years ago. I stole it from him to-day when he was n't watchin', and he says you must make me give it back to him."

"I am sorry, Jed," replied Sullivan, with assumed gravity, "that you have fallen into the bad habit of doing such things. After this, I forbid you to steal a Seneca's rifle unless he is looking at you."

The situation within the officer's tent was one of the most unique that can be pictured. Jack Ripley sat silent and greatly interested. Near him was the scout who acted as interpreter for the chief actors in the comedy, one feature of which impressed itself upon General Sullivan and caused a quiet smile.

Red Jacket absolutely ignored the man who had put so great a humiliation upon him only a brief while before. When he spoke to the commander,

the Seneca, as was his custom, looked him straight in the eye, and he did the same, while Jed Stiffens was turning the words of himself or his host into understandable language. Sullivan's eyes naturally wandered to Jed when he was speaking, but his visitor conducted himself as if the conversation was directly between him and the officer.

Red Jacket awaited the decision of General Sullivan, who lowered his voice and spoke so rapidly that the visitor could not catch the meaning of his words.

"Jed, you may do as you choose about the gun. By the rules of war, it is yours, and it is a piece of impudence for Red Jacket to come into camp and demand that it shall be given back to him. I give you no advice; act your own pleasure."

"He may have it, for it is n't likely to do any of us harm so long as it is in his hands. I left it with Captain Wells, and, if you 'll 'low me, I 'll fetch it."

Addressing himself to the chief, the scout made one of his greatest efforts:

"The commander of the thousands of soldiers who are marching into the country of the Six Nations to cut them off from the earth, takes great happiness to himself that it is his privilege to give back into the hands of the greatest sachem of the Iroquois the rifle that was presented to him by Sir William Johnson, because of his admiration for the bravery of the greatest American Indian leader,

fighter, and orator that ever lived. He has ordered his dog of a scout never to take away the gun from Red Jacket, under pain of his displeasure, and he begs that if the dog of a scout dares to do so, he asks Red Jacket to bring or send him word as quick as he can that he may put the dog of a scout to death and hang his scalp from the ridge-pole of his wigwam. He assures Red Jacket that he loves him more than his own brother."

What a fortunate thing for Jed Stiffens that General Sullivan did not understand a word of the Seneca tongue! He was serenely unconscious of the fraud played upon him until months afterwards.

"I 'll be back in a few minutes with his gun," remarked Jed, hastening out of the tent. His departure made the situation peculiarly embarrassing, for Sullivan could not undertake to keep up the conversation with Red Jacket, who would not respond, though able to do so in his broken way. And yet he understood everything said in the foreign tongue, and the courteous instincts of the American officer impelled him to treat his visitor with every consideration.

Of course the sachem gave no indication that he was aware of the presence of Jack Ripley, even though he had honored him with a special address some hours before, and given utterance to many high compliments to his father. The grim Seneca,

RED JACKET VISITS GENERAL SULLIVAN. *Page 130.*

upon the departure of the scout, rose to his feet, folded his arms, and fixed his keen gaze upon the flap of the tent that had been raised to allow Jed Stiffens to pass out. His manner was as if he were unaware of the presence of Sullivan himself, and were simply awaiting the return of a messenger that had gone forth upon some order given to him by the sachem. During the brief interval when neither General Sullivan nor Jack Ripley spoke, the latter recalled that extraordinary secret which had come to him earlier in the day, when he stood in front of Red Jacket and knew he was condemned to death.

"Shall I tell General Sullivan what I know?" the youth asked himself, meaning, of course, that in the event of his doing so he would wait until the caller had departed. "If there seemed to be any good likely to result from it, I should do so, and should let Jed know about it. But I can see no harm that will come to any one by my keeping the matter to myself. I will think it over."

The myriad sounds of the camp life came to the three within the tent. The evening was so well advanced that most of the men had stretched themselves out on their blankets on the bare ground, and were sleeping the deep, refreshing slumber of health and weariness; but enough remained awake and gathered about the camp-fires to fill the air with the sounds of their singing and laughter. In the distance

the faint notes of a band floated through the air, and the tune was that exceedingly lively one known the world over as "Yankee Doodle."

And just here we must diverge for a paragraph to give one or two historical facts regarding this famous air. It originated seven hundred years ago in the Roman Catholic Church, and was first used as a chant. When played slowly on an organ, its fitness for that purpose will be perceived. It was adopted several hundred years later by Holland as a pastoral song. Then England appropriated it, in the sixteenth century, and used it at Lexington to taunt the Americans, who took it out of their mouths, as may be said, and sang it at them when they were retreating in disorder to Boston. As General Gage bitterly remarked, "We marched out to the tune of 'Yankee Doodle,' and danced back to the same jig."

The last notes of the melody were lingering in the night air on the banks of the Susquehanna when the flap of the tent was drawn aside, and the stooping form of Jed Stiffens entered, bearing in his hand the coveted weapon.

"Take your rifle, Red Jacket, and the next time you meet the scout of the Americans, don't be afraid of shootin' afore you turn tail and run like the big coward you are."

The sachem accepted the gun, without a word or

inclination of his head, and, passing out of the tent, was taken in charge by the two soldiers that had conducted him thither. Sullivan nodded to Jed Stiffens without speaking, and, understanding the meaning of the sign, he followed their visitor.

Keeping a few paces behind the trio, the scout kept on to the outer line of sentinels, where there was a brief interchange of words when Red Jacket, being given to understand he was at liberty to depart, silently disappeared in the gloom of the surrounding woods. Jed ventured upon a suggestion of unremitting watchfulness on the part of the sentries, and then made his way back to the tent of the commanding general, to whom he reported what had taken place.

"Jed," said that officer, "what was Red Jacket's real errand in coming here?"

"He thinks a good deal of that gun of his, and it 's a powerful fine weapon."

"But was that his sole purpose in coming to my tent?"

"No; have you give any orders, Gin'ral, 'bout him?"

"Yes; I may say that, from what I have heard, I expected a call from the chief, and I left directions that if he made himself known he should be brought to me. But, I admit that I supposed he would make his call in the daytime."

"He come to see our camp for himself."

"But it is easy for him or any of his people to learn our number and strength without placing himself in our power."

"It war n't that; he wanted to find out what sort of watch was kept, and what chance there was for him and the Iroquois to s'prise you."

"Well, he learned that there is n't any chance at all."

"That 's sartin; and you see that the night time was the hour when he should take a look at things. His visit has done good, for though they may shoot a few of our sentinels, they won't make any attack —that 's sartin."

"Jed, I am disturbed by this call of Red Jacket. I wish you would make a circuit of the sentries, and see that everything is right."

"I 'll be glad to do so, for the idee is a good one. We 'll bid you good-night, Gin'ral."

Jed and Jack saluted the commander, and passed out of the tent into the bright moonlight, speaking to the orderly who was on duty, and who knew both.

"Younker," said the scout, "you ain't in on this deal."

"Why not, Jed? Can't I help you?"

"Not a bit. But don't feel bad; I 'll find plenty for you to do to-morrer. What you want jest now

is to sleep like a top, and I reckon you hain't forgot how to do that."

It was a disappointment to Jack Ripley, but he made no complaint, and walked by the challenging sentinels until they reached a huge smouldering camp-fire, where scores of men were stretched on the ground, some partly covered with blankets, more with the coverings cast entirely aside, because of the mildness of the night, while others were provided with no blankets at all. Their arms were stacked within easy reach, and a force attempting to surprise the camp of General Sullivan on that summer night in 1779 would have been met with a surprise itself. Jed had a place reserved, where his blanket was rolled and awaiting use. Nodding to it, he said:

"I reckon you can make yourself comfor'ble there."

"There 's no doubt of it. Good-night and good luck to you."

Returning the salutation, the scout turned about and began carefully picking his way among the sleeping soldiers and through the camp to the outer range of sentinels.

General Sullivan would have shown himself criminally ignorant of his duty had he neglected any precaution for the safety of the men so peculiarly exposed to peril in an Indian country. His camping

ground was selected with the utmost care, and, as a rule, a goodly space was preserved between the sentries and the woods that were so favorable for concealing a lurking foe. Still this was not always possible, and in the present instance the camp to the north was fronted by a patch of forest which approached so nigh that the sentinel on duty in that quarter was in fair range of any foe who, if he chose, could steal up undetected in the gloom.

The night was peculiarly favorable for such work, for the moon was at the full and riding high in the sky. The sentry, as he paced slowly back and forth, was almost in as plain sight as if the sun were shining, while the forest beyond, because of its luxuriant foliage, was wrapped in shadow. Moreover, the beat of the guard was over an uneven ground interspersed with patches of undergrowth and hollows, in many of which a foe could readily hide himself, provided he had the opportunity of gaining the places unperceived.

When perils of the nature described threatened the camp, it was the custom of General Sullivan's officers to detail several of the scouts to pass stealthily back and forth through the forest itself in order to head off or give warning of the approach of the treacherous enemy. It would seem, therefore, that the sentries were so well guarded themselves that none was in more danger than another.

Although Jed Stiffens was provided with the countersign, it was fully half an hour before he reached the station to which particular reference has been made. He seemed to be known to almost every man in the army, and, after the formal exchange of salutations, he generally tarried for a brief conversation. He stopped to speak a few words in this informal manner with the man stationed next to the sentry to whom Jed intended to give particular attention, when, glancing to the left, he asked:

"Who b'longs over there?"

"Sam Farnham."

"I don't see him; he oughter be in sight."

"Of course; that 's strange," added the sentry, looking in the direction indicated. "I saw him only a minute ago. I can't imagine where he has gone."

It will be understood that the two sentinels should have been in sight of each other all the time. That one had vanished so unaccountably was cause for the gravest misgiving. Since the second could not leave his beat, Jed Stiffens hurried away.

He was on the alert, for he was sure some deviltry was on foot. He kept his rifle in hand, ready for use at a moment's call, while nothing escaped his eye.

He passed a short way over the beat, giving special attention to the wood on his right, and wondering whether the scouts sent thither earlier in the

evening had failed to attend to their duty, when, in one of the hollows referred to, he descried the missing sentinel.

His posture was so peculiar that, at the first glance, Jed Stiffens was convinced that his friend, feeling drowsy, had sat down on the ground and fallen asleep. He was sitting, with his knees partly drawn up and his head bowed on his breast, motionless and silent.

The scout stood still and listened. He heard nothing of the heavy breathing that ought to have been the result of the constrained position. Then, while studying the form, he noticed a peculiar object in the vivid moonlight.

It was the feathered barb of an Indian arrow, whose keen flint was buried deep in the chest of the lifeless sentinel.

CHAPTER XIV.

SUPERB WOODCRAFT.

"DIED at the post of duty," was the epitaph that deserved to be engraven on the tomb of Sam Farnham, who perished while serving as one of the sentinels of General Sullivan.

Jed Stiffens, not forgetting that he was exposed to the same peril, stepped hastily forward and bent over the lifeless figure. Placing his hand tenderly on the shoulder, he pronounced the poor fellow's name, even though he knew there could not possibly be any response. Then he laid him gently upon his side, grasped the reed of the arrow and pulled hard, in the hope of drawing it forth from the cruel wound.

It was useless. The diamond-shaped head was driven almost entirely through the body, and it was impossible to withdraw it, such inability being the result of design on the part of the maker of the missile, which, acting as a stopper of the hurt it had made, allowed little blood to escape.

Straightening up, Jed turned his head and called to the other friend in a guarded voice what had

taken place. That sentinel, as in duty bound, summoned the corporal of the guard, who brought two men with him, removed the body, and put his successor in place.

"It 's a ticklish spot, Jim," remarked the corporal, when the preliminaries were over; "but the orders are that a sentinel must be stationed here, and there seems to be no help for it."

Jim Dunn was a strapping fellow from Connecticut, more than six feet in height, though barely twenty years of age. He had the reputation of being one of the bravest men in the army, and his reply was characteristic:

"Have you heard me growl?"

"Of course not. You would n't growl if you had to sail into five hundred redskins."

"Well, what are you driving at? Do you think such talk as yours is calculated to cheer up a chap in my position?"

"I did n't mean to depress you."

"What the mischief *did* you mean?"

"Whatever you choose," replied the nettled corporal, walking away with his companion and leaving Jed Stiffens with the giant sentinel.

"Jim," said the scout, "I 'm goin' to try the grand sneak on the varmint that played that mean trick on poor Sam."

"What do you mean?"

"He 's off there now in the wood waitin' for a chance to drive an arrer through you; more 'n likely he 's got his eyes on us this minute."

"Why don't he shoot? He could n't have a better chance."

"'Cause there 's two of us. He could n't wipe us both out very well at the same shot, and the one that he did n't hit would be apt to call on him and make things onpleasant."

"You think, Jed, that he 'll wait for a chance at me?"

"There ain't no doubt of it. How did you intend to fix things if you was left here alone?"

"Hanged if I know. I suppose he would be so careful, knowing that we had found out what he had done, that he would wait a while and show himself on the edge of the wood, where I could get a crack at him."

"That ain't the Injin style of doin' bus'ness; he ain't likely to bother you for a half-hour or more, and I 'll get my work in by that time."

Bidding Jim good-night, Jed Stiffens sauntered in the direction of the other sentinel, who was exposed to almost as much danger as the first. Aware of this, the scout cautioned him to be on the alert, though Jed observed that he was nervous and ill at ease, and the warning was hardly necessary. Then Jed continued his stroll, as if his

intention was to enter the camp and sleep for the rest of the night.

But, as has been intimated, he had no such purpose. By a circuitous course, far longer and more guarded than any one else would have adopted, he entered the wood which had already proven such a nest of danger to the American sentinels.

"Now, if that varmint has got his work in while I was away," was his discomfiting thought, "why it 'll be too bad."

But peering out from among the trees, he was vastly relieved to see the tall form stalking back and forth with as much deliberation as if no such thing as peril was known in the wide world.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Jed to himself. "One of the sneakin' Iroquois could n't ask a better chance to pick off our poor fellows."

The situation was one which called into play the most subtle and wonderful qualities of the famous scout—the ones that had given him a pre-eminence among his numerous associates in the difficult work to which he had devoted the best years of his life. He had taken his station perhaps a dozen paces, or slightly less, from the edge of the wood, and his act in doing so was in obedience to the marvellous skill with which he adapted the means to the ends he had in view.

In the first place, that portion of the forest was

almost wholly devoid of undergrowth, a fact which had its advantages as well as disadvantages. It was easier for him to move about and manœuvre than if his limbs and body were hampered by vegetation, but the fact would also be favorable to the particular Iroquois whom he had in mind.

He reasoned that while the latter would take care not to expose himself to view by emerging into the open space, he would be compelled to go nigh enough to secure an unobstructed aim at the sentinel. By looking behind him, Jed Stiffens would be unable to detect his enemy when a yard distant, because the dense foliage overhead and the closeness of the trees excluded every beam of moonlight, but, by getting to the rear of the dusky miscreant, his form would be thrown against the open space where the moongleam had full play, and his outlines must be revealed, provided Jed located the spot where his foe would endeavor to discharge the fatal missile at the exposed sentinel.

If, however, the Seneca stole forward at a point several rods to the right or left of the station taken by the scout, the latter would miss him, and Jim Dunn in all earthly probability would be sent to keep company with his predecessor. It would seem as it it were drawing matters altogether too fine to say that Jed Stiffens was able to fix upon the exact spot where the assassin would station himself, in

order to launch his arrow at the sentinel in the moonlight; and yet that was the precise feat which the extraordinary scout set out to accomplish and in which he was confident he would succeed.

How?

Through the single sense of hearing, since that was the only one that could be of the slightest assistance to him at the opening of the tragedy, as it may be called. With all the stealth that the Iroquois might put forth, and with the amazing skill acquired by years of training, he could not avoid making the slightest possible rustling, inasmuch as the gloom would not allow him to see where he set down his moccasins. Besides, it was not likely he would feel the necessity of using more than ordinary vigilance.

There must be the rustle of a leaf now and then; his breech-clout must softly graze the trunk of some tree; his hands must touch the obstructions he could not see, and though the sound would be too faint to rouse a watching panther, yet Jed Stiffens would hear it and read its meaning.

Aye, he would detect the almost inaudible rustling, even if fifty feet distant from where he stood on the side of a trunk which faced the clearing. Had he placed himself on the opposite side, the Iroquois might have discovered his presence by touching him with one of his outstretched hands as

he groped along, but he could not do so with the trees intervening between them.

Again, if the soft tell-tale rustling apprised Jed Stiffens that his adversary was groping forward, but at some distance to the right or left, it would become necessary for the white man to resort to the same manœuvring that had betrayed the red one, in order to " get the drop " on the other. But Jed had no misgiving as to his ability to do that seemingly impossible thing.

One factor in his favor should be noted. He was looking for the Iroquois, while the Iroquois was not looking for him. There is more significance in this statement than would at first seem.

It is impossible to conceive of the sense of hearing being trained to a more miraculous edge than was that of Jed Stiffens. As he stood in the gloom, absolutely invisible to one a single pace away, nothing escaped him. The voice of some one who spoke in an ordinary conversational tone, far off in the camp, was plainly audible; he detected the soft flow of the river, which, being without rapids or obstruction, seemed to give out no sound whatever. The night was unusually calm, but a breath of air stirred a few leaves in the tops of two or three trees, and Jed glanced upward as if he expected a shadowy figure to drop down on his shoulders.

But none of these interested him. Then suddenly a leaf was disturbed on the carpeted ground. It might have been done by a serpent gliding away from the presence of the enemy that it scented, or by some nocturnal bird searching for food, but Jed Stiffens believed it was caused by the moccasin of an Iroquois. Be that as it may, he fixed upon the precise point, as about the same distance from the edge of the clearing as his own station, but more than twenty feet "off side." It was necessary, therefore, for him to effect a change of base in order to bring the redskin between him and the background of moonlight, and without a moment's delay he set out to do so.

While the movement of the Seneca was as stealthy as that of a creeping panther, that of the scout was literally noiseless, for had the suspicion of the dusky wretch been stirred, he would not have discovered the fearful danger that was stealing upon him, like the shadow of a cloud passing over the face of the moon.

The Iroquois was using more caution than Jed expected, but, great as it was, it did not avail him, and, within less time than would be supposed from the moment of making his discovery, Jed Stiffens had secured the position which placed him in the rear of his man, who could not advance to the point from which to launch his arrow without being observed by his master.

There seemed to be a movement of the shadow in the direction of the open ground. At first invisible, because of the obstructing trees, it glided forward, farther out of the labyrinth of gloom, and revealed the faintest possible outlines of a tufted head and one shoulder.

The scout had seen his man, and decided to use his rifle, and since there was no cause for delay, and much danger to Jim Dunn in it, Jed Stiffens brought his weapon to bear with a result which it is unnecessary to state.

CHAPTER XV.

A BIG BLACK BEAR.

JED STIFFENS never stirred from his position until he completed the duty which he had so many times impressed upon Jack Ripley and his friends. With the sulphurous vapor circling about his face from the muzzle of his rifle, he poured out the proper amount of powder from the horn suspended from his neck, into the palm of his hand, leaned the weapon over, so as to incline the barrel to the right angle, and then carefully emptied the grains into the muzzle, down which they softly rattled to the bottom of the cylinder. Then he took a bullet from his pouch, wrapped it about with a bit of linen, which he shoved down upon the powder with the iron ramrod, extracted from its sheathing at the rear of the gun itself. It was pressed until the lead rested snugly on the powder.

It was a common practice in those days to pound the wadding upon the powder, after which the bullet rolled loosely after it, and another bit of wadding was packed with less force upon it; but the scout followed the practice described, which, as will be

noted, saved valuable time. Restoring the ramrod to its place, he next poured powder into the pan of the gun, letting down the hammer and flint, so that the movement locked the grains in the receptacle, ready to receive the spark from the flint when the pressure of the trigger should let the spring throw it forward and impinge against the bit of steel that caused the spark to light the powder and send the flash through the vent-hole into the charge in the gun barrel.

The method of firing the old-fashioned weapons of our ancestors was cumbrous and awkward as compared with the breech-loading guns of the present day, but those same ancestors needed no instruction in the aiming and discharge of their rifles, whose accuracy at times approached the marvellous.

It will be understood that everything done by Jed Stiffens was from the sense of feeling, but the fact mattered nothing to him. He had done the same thing before, and it was as perfect in its way as if the sun had been at meridian. When finished, and he quietly grasped the rifle, he knew it would not fail him.

The silence was as profound as before, and with his wonderfully acute sense of hearing he listened for the stealthy approach of another foe. It would seem likely that other Iroquois were in the

neighborhood and, unaware of the white man's presence, would steal forward to reconnoitre for themselves. Jed hoped they would do so, for he did not consider his task as yet quite completed. He wished to impress upon the dusky miscreants that it would not pay them to try their treacherous methods on the American soldiers.

One thing was certain: if, among the Iroquois, there happened to be one possessing the amazing acuteness of Jed Stiffens, his gifts would serve him no purpose so long as the situation remained as it was, for the scout maintained his absolutely motionless position, and therefore gave out no sound that any human being could detect.

He stood so far back among the trees that his view of the open space beyond was much obstructed, but now and then he could see the shadowy figure of Jim Dunn, pacing back and forth with the same cool deliberation he had shown from the first. Brave as was the man, his nerves had been subjected to one of the most trying tests conceivable, but he went through it well.

For half an hour everything remained unchanged. Jed was convinced that none of his enemies was in the vicinity, for had one of them been near at hand there would have been evidence of it. This fact led him to believe that the work of slaying the white sentinels by means of the noiseless bow and arrow

was the idea of a single daring warrior, who was willing to take risks from which his comrades shrank. Having paid the penalty, there was no one to take his place, since it had been demonstrated to the Iroquois that while one of their number was stealing into a position from which to launch his missile at the sentinel, the miscreant was really at that time exposed to the friends of the sentinel, who were as fine adepts in woodcraft as he.

Of necessity, all this was speculation on the part of Jed Stiffens, but it was characteristic of him that, having reached the conclusion, he acted upon it without hesitation. Passing only a short distance to the left—that is to say, toward the point where he had entered the wood,—he boldly stepped out into the moonlight and advanced toward Jim Dunn, the sentinel. The latter was on the alert, but he had his wits about him, and, vastly to his relief, recognized the scout, who approached him in the vivid moonlight.

"I don't think there are any more varmints about," quietly remarked the scout, as he joined the fellow, who ceased his pacing and awaited his approach.

"One thing is certain," replied Dunn, grimly; "*that* particular specimen won't bother any of us. How was it?"

In a few words Jed told what had taken place.

"Dick, over yender is a little skeery. I 'll call on him and tell him I 'm sure he has n't anything to be afeard of," added the scout, moving toward the adjoining sentinel, who, it will be remembered, had displayed considerable nervousness. Jed had slight difficulty in soothing his fears, after which he turned in the direction of camp, and made his way past the sentinels until he reached the group where he had bidden Jack Ripley good-night.

There lay the youth, partly wrapped in the blanket, his rifle beside him, and one arm doubled under his head for a pillow. He was sleeping as soundly as if in his bed at home, after his mother had tucked him up and kissed him good-night. The moonlight fell on his face, lighting up the handsome features and countenance, and imparting a sweet, softened beauty to them that was wholly its own.

Some folks would have distrusted this exposure to the moon's rays, but to the scout it meant nothing. He stood for a few minutes amid the group of sleepers, looking down on the lad, who, somehow or other, he felt was entrusted to his care, and over whom it was his duty to hold special guard. The grim veteran of the woods was strangely affected, and murmured to himself:

"It 's the purtiest face I ever laid eyes on. He 's got all the beauty of his father and mother, and they 're the purtiest of their kind—and he 's got

all their vartues, too!" he added, impulsively. "It 's a pity he war n't born twenty years airlier, for, if he had been, he would have been in the place of Gin'ral Sullivan to-night.

"I wonder if he 'll come out of this bus'ness alive?" continued the scout, musingly, yielding to a depression of spirits very unusual with him. "There 's bound to be a fight with the Injins, and some of our men will never see home agin; a good many more must pass under afore the war ends, and mebbe the colonel and the younker and myself will not live to see the end. It don't matter 'bout *me*, but it will be a bad thing for the country if the colonel and his boy peg out. Ah, well! heaven has been kind to us all, and my promptin's is to hold on to the last."

With another sigh, he lay down beside his young friend, taking care not to disturb him, and within the following ten minutes was sleeping as soundly as Jack Ripley himself.

Meanwhile, Jim Dunn found his position anything but soothing. So long as he knew that Jed Stiffens was in the neighborhood, he felt safe; but when the scout passed from view in the direction of the camp, he understood that he considered his duty over for the night, and was not likely to be seen before the morrow.

"Jed has a way of figuring out things that I could

never understand. He seems somehow to have come to the belief that we won't be bothered any more to-night with any of the Six Nations; but I can't feel that way. It will be two hours before the relief will come, and," he added, compressing his lips, " a good deal may happen in two hours."

Continually casting his glance in the direction of the dreaded wood, he saw that the moon was now so directly overhead that the shrinking ribbon of shadow along the margin of the clearing had vanished. The moonlight touched the fringe of trees, and by and by was thrown against them. The fact was a relief to the sentinel, though it could not wholly remove his fears.

Every one knows the insidious nature of sleep, and how, when we are the most confident that we are master of our senses, they leave us. Hence the requirement that a sentinel must keep in motion, since a few minutes' pause is likely to cause him to give way to drowsiness.

No one understood the logic of this better than Jim Dunn; but, all the same, he deliberately decided to violate regulations. His predecessor on post had been killed by an arrow fired so noiselessly that it was not probable he caught the twang of the string. What had been was likely to be again.

Who that bore a hand in the land fighting at Santiago will forget the creepy, horrible sensation

caused by the Spaniards' use of smokeless powder? When the bullets were whistling about the ears of the Americans, entering head or body, and stretching brave fellows lifeless, it was exasperating beyond description to be unable to tell the point whence came the fatal fire. It was much like being tied to a tree, and having a band of savages amuse themselves by hurling their tomahawks at you.

The sensations of Jim Dunn were similar, for there was no means of telling when the deadly arrow would flash out from among the trees, without so much as a hiss, in the way of warning, as it plunged into his body. Giving the matter but a moment's thought, he stepped into one of the hollows or depressions of the earth, crouched down, and peered over the edge at the wood. It may be said that he was turning to account the natural trench which nature offered him.

Fortunately, in the case of the sentinel there was no danger of his falling asleep. His nerves were too highly wrought to permit that. Pointing his gun over the ground in front, he raised his head sufficiently to gain a clear view of the forest within easy range, and for the following half hour scarcely removed his gaze. It was only when the continued straining of his vision made it indistinct that he glanced in other directions, and thus secured momentary relief.

As the minutes passed, the sentinel gradually came to the belief that, after all, Jed Stiffens must have had warrant for his conclusion, and that the night was to end without any further demonstration on the part of the Iroquois.

But the conviction had hardly time to form in his mind, when he gave a start, for at the very point upon which his gaze happened to be fixed, he saw something move. There could be no doubt of it, for he was expecting nothing of the kind, and it was impossible, therefore, that it should be imagination. Whatever the nature of the object, its appearance was too vague and brief for it to be identified until a second view was obtained.

"Some new sort of devilment, I suppose — helloa!"

That which caught his eye was now seen so distinctly that he identified it as a quadruped, moving along the edge of the wood, as if distrustful about venturing farther into view. Its form and awkward, lumbering gait, showed it was a bear, or at least the perfect image of one.

Jim Dunn grinned.

"I wish Jed had waited to see *this* trick. I don't wonder that he did n't believe the Indians would try that old dodge on us—helloa again!"

The hesitation of the brute lasted only a few minutes. Stopping short, with his head pointed

toward the trench where the watchful sentinel crouched, he seemed to be looking for him and wondering where he had gone. Then, as if yielding to curiosity, he began swinging across the open space, and advanced directly upon the white man, whose rifle barrel gleamed in the moonlight, as he drew a careful bead upon the quadruped.

Custom would have required Jim Dunn to challenge the intruder before advancing, but the situation warranted a different course. He waited until half the distance was passed, when he pulled trigger. The creature made a convulsive movement, uttered a peculiar sound, partly rose on its feet, and then toppled over on its side and lay motionless. Reloading his gun, the sentinel waited a few minutes until sure that no life remained in the body, when he crept forward to investigate, feeling somewhat mystified at certain phases of the strange occurrence.

Pausing before the carcase, he kicked it with his foot, so as to shift its position. This was repeated several times until all doubt was removed. Then he exclaimed, disgustedly:

"By gracious! It *was* a bear after all!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARMY OF INVASION.

THE scene on the following morning was in striking contrast to the quiet and stillness of the night that preceded it. Three thousand men, as may be said, sprang at the sound of the reveille from slumber into activity. There was hurrying to and fro, fires were rekindled, the air was laden with the odor of cooking food, guards were sent out to take the places of those called in, commands were uttered by the hundred, horses were saddled and bridled; each man seemed to have something to do and only a few minutes in which to do it, and all this the result of the rattling drums that had awakened the echoes of the woods and hills but a brief while before.

There was method, however, in this seeming confusion, for the multitude was composed of trained soldiers, who had long since become accustomed to their duties, and all fell into position like parts of a well-oiled machine. In less time than would be supposed, the army was marching northward, the flatboats gliding smoothly up the shallow Susquehanna,

propelled by the poles of the boatmen, and in some instances assisted, as before, by the ropes of the soldiers dragging them from the shore. An army must needs carry an immense amount of baggage, and many a time its lack or loss has brought disaster to a formidable force.

General Sullivan and his officers were the types of watchfulness and activity. Flanking parties were moving ahead, and in advance of them were the eyes of the army, in the persons of the scouts, of which Jed Stiffens was the leader, with young Jack Ripley as his companion.

On the top of the ridge which was the scene of most of the incidents already described, the advance-guard halted, and General Sullivan with his staff peered off to the northward, each with glasses to his eyes, scanning the country for signs of the reinforcements under General James Clinton, who, it was known, were not far off.

In the morning haze, on the edge of the horizon, were distinguished columns of smoke climbing into the summer sky. They marked the scene of Clinton's camp, and, instead of continuing his march to the southward, he was awaiting the coming of the main army.

Suddenly, through the warm, pulsating air came a low booming sound, followed at a brief interval by another and another, until a dozen of them had

swept over the miles of intervening forest and clearing and reached the ears of all in the army.

They were the signal-guns of General Clinton, announcing that he had located his friends, and knew of their coming. By direction of General Sullivan, his own cannon answered, and thus it may be said an understanding was effected between the smaller and larger body of troops.

"Clinton is wise," remarked Sullivan to General Hand, commander of the rifle corps; "for he has a strong position, and means to hold it until we come up."

"He is strong enough to advance and meet us," replied that valiant officer, one of the best in the American army.

"Most likely you are right; but there would be considerable risk, and the necessity for incurring it is lacking."

"Surely, there is little to be feared from the Six Nations."

"Not if we had them alone to fight; but the news of our coming has long since spread among them. We shall meet not only Iroquois, but British regulars and Tories."

"I am glad to hear that," remarked General Hand, with a flash of his fine gray eyes.

"And so am I," added the commander, with a forcible exclamation; "for General Washington

impressed upon me that this must be the hardest kind of blow we know how to strike, and the more of our enemies we can get in front the more we shall have to punish."

"The trouble is, they won't stand."

"Don't feel so certain of that, General. The situation is peculiar."

"In what respect?"

"A wildcat will fight like fury to defend her young. While we are not making war upon the squaws and papooses of the Six Nations, we are going straight for their houses and farms and crops, and *they know it!* Somewhere between here and their villages we shall have warm work."

"I am constrained to agree with you, and it gives me pleasure to do so. I understand, General, that you received a call from Red Jacket last night."

"Such is the fact. He accused Jed Stiffens, the scout, of stealing his rifle when he was n't looking, and Jed was good enough to give it back to him."

The commander laughed as he recalled the incident, and added:

"Possibly that was a part of the sachem's errand, for I am told the weapon was a present from Sir William Johnson, and naturally the sachem valued it highly. It was one of the finest guns I ever saw. But Jed was right when he declared that our visitor used the pretext to gain a knowledge of our camp itself."

"I have heard that Red Jacket is not noted for his personal courage."

"Such is the fact; for Cornplanter, Brandt, and Butler have told him so to his face, and since he did not resent the charge, it is proof of the truth of their words. None the less, he is a most dangerous fellow."

"In what respect?"

"He is the greatest orator ever produced by the Six Nations, and you know they are the most remarkable Indians on this continent. He knows how to stir up the savages until they are ready to attack a mountain wall."

"Why not manage to take him prisoner? From what you have told me, he must have been in the power of Jed Stiffens when he secured his gun."

"General," said Sullivan, as they rode forward side by side, "there are some things connected with Red Jacket that are so peculiar that I must confess I do not understand them. He was the prisoner of Jed Stiffens who, with two companions, captured him and two more chiefs of the Senecas—Young King and Captain Pollard. But just before this was done, Red Jacket had the young son of Colonel Horatio Ripley in his power, but gave him back his freedom, after restoring his rifle to him."

"What was the cause of such unusual mercy by one of the leaders of the Senecas?"

"Red Jacket, despite his hatred of our race, seems to feel a gratitude and strong friendship for Colonel Ripley,—so strong, indeed, that it extends to his son."

"All who know Colonel Ripley feel the same way —that is, those of our own race do; but it is unaccountable to me that the feeling should influence an Iroquois on the war-path."

"Such is not the rule, I admit. We have heard a good deal about the gratitude and chivalry of the red man, but you and I have seen precious little of it in real life. Still it may exist, and be true of Red Jacket."

"I do not see how such a condition lessens the necessity of pulling the fangs of the great orator, or rather, closing his mouth."

The officers had fallen somewhat behind the advance, and as everything was progressing smoothly, they spoke freely. General Sullivan was silent a moment, and then he remarked, more thoughtfully:

"General, I am carrying out the wishes of our Commander-in-Chief."

"Of Washington!" exclaimed General Hand, in astonishment. His superior nodded his head.

"He instructed me to show every consideration I could to Red Jacket. Had I made him prisoner under the circumstances I have explained to you, and which I should have been compelled to explain

in turn to the General, I fear he would disapprove of what I had done."

"In what way could General Washington have gained any knowledge of Red Jacket?"

"Is there *anything* of which he has n't knowledge?" asked Sullivan, in a burst of admiration. "I cannot at this moment recall any circumstances under which he and Red Jacket could have met, for their scenes of activity have been far apart; but it looks as if there had been some communication between them."

"That need not follow; but can it be?" asked General Hand, lowering his voice and betraying considerable excitement, "that Red Jacket is in truth a friend of ours?—that he and General Washington understand each other, and that the Seneca is playing into our hands?"

"I have asked myself that question, but I see no way by which it can be answered in the affirmative. It may be that something of the kind has been on foot, but from what I have been able to learn of Red Jacket, he cannot be trusted. If he professes to be friendly to us, it is only a pretence. I suspected once or twice last night that he came to my tent to make some proposition, but was restrained by the necessity of Jed Stiffens acting as interpreter. He hates Jed."

"Well, everything must be surmise on our part,

and we can only be ready for whatever comes, whether it be good or evil."

The philosophy of this remark may not have been brilliant, but it was sound, and the commanding general said so. Naturally, their interest was centred in the country in front, through which they were making their way. It was mostly wooded, but there were many openings, some of them numbering many acres, while others were of so slight area as to seem only patches in the landscape.

As has been shown, Sullivan used every possible precaution, knowing that his men were liable to a vicious attack at any hour. When necessary to pass through a piece of wood sufficiently extensive to conceal a considerable number of the foe, it was first reconnoitred by the scouts or skirmishers, and then generally shelled. The wisdom of the latter precaution was shown when, after a seemingly unfavorable piece of forest had been pronounced free from serious danger by several scouts, a few shells were dropped among the trees. A few minutes later, fully a hundred warriors were seen as they scurried out of range and dived into other cover before the shots of the Americans had opportunity to harm them.

From eight or ten points, separated by distances varying from a mile to ten times that space, columns of smoke were observed climbing into the clear sky.

Some ascended vertically, some had a peculiar wavy form, while others were broken into distinct layers, as has been described in another place. Every man in the army who noticed these knew they were Iroquois signal-fires, and that the information conveyed from one body to another was as intelligible as if uttered by word of mouth.

The precise meaning of the signals no one knew. Even Jed Stiffens found it impossible to translate them. That, however, was a small matter, since it was of no importance to the Americans what the red men said. The most they could do was to notify the different bodies of Indians, Tories, and British of the course taken by the invading army, as it moved steadily and resistlessly toward the doomed villages of the Six Nations.

The afternoon was well advanced when General Sullivan's army reached Tioga, where General Clinton was awaiting them with more than a thousand men, he having descended the Upper Susquehanna from Otsego Lake. As has been intimated, Clinton had taken a strong position, with intrenchments thrown up, instead of pushing farther southward to meet his superior officer. This was a wise step on his part, and received the commendation of Sullivan; for, since the plan of campaign was to press to the northward, Clinton would of necessity be compelled to turn about and retrace his own steps, and

no advantage as a whole would thereby accrue to the combined forces. He had therefore felt his way south as far as it was prudent to go.

During this singular march down the Susquehanna, Clinton was in constant expectation of attack, and there was surprise expressed by more than one veteran campaigner that the attack was not made, for its prospect of success was inevitably greater when the Americans numbered only about a third of the united army. Several reasons for this immunity existed, one of which was of a singular nature. It will be recalled that Clinton carried his boats out of Otsego Lake by constructing a dam across the outlet and holding his craft until the accumulated waters carried them away with a rush. There was something so astounding in the sight to the watching Indians, who had never dreamed of anything of the kind, that they looked upon it as an interposition of the Great Spirit, who was displeased with them. A widespread demoralization, therefore, hampered their actions for a time.

Moreover, since General Clinton, instead of marching toward their villages, was going directly away from them, he was doing the most pleasing thing possible to them. Why, therefore, should they interfere ?

The time, of course, soon came when the real purpose of Clinton dawned upon the Iroquois.

Then there was hurrying to and fro, and more than one plan was discussed of cutting him off before he could reach the main army. But his extreme vigilance and wise skill prevented this, and, by the time a formidable force of red men, Tories, and British could be brought together, it was too late to interpose an effective check to the smaller force.

CHAPTER XVII.

A PRISONER OF WAR.

AT a point in the woods too far to the westward to be in the path of the flanking party which General Sullivan had sent in that direction, three men were holding an earnest conference at the time the main body was approaching Tioga, where General Clinton awaited its coming.

The spot selected was in a hollow, so hidden by undergrowth that not one of the three felt any fear of interruption. They were seated upon a fallen tree, each within touch of the other, and a glance at their faces would have shown that all were impressed by the gravity of the situation.

The man who sat nearest the butt of the prostrate tree wore the uniform of a colonel of the British army. Such, indeed, was his rank, his title being Colonel Howard Rossiter, of his Majesty's —— Foot. He carried no rifle, but wore a sword and pistol. The man next to him was the Seneca war-chief, Little Billy, whose principal business was that of acting as interpreter between the colonel on his right and Red Jacket on his left.

"It has been clear for several days," remarked the officer, "that this large force is on its way to your towns, and it is quite likely that they will push on and attack Fort Niagara."

"Then," said Red Jacket, bitterly, speaking, of course, through the interpreter, "why have not your people come to our help?"

"We have not the men, and not enough notice was given us. Did you dream that so large a force of Americans would advance into this part of the country?"

"Yes; I knew it long ago," was the sullen reply.

"Then why did you not tell us of it, that the soldiers of your Father across the water might have hurried to the help of their red brothers?"

"Because," was the biting response of the Seneca, "we did not know where to look for you. You were hiding in the woods, glad to get behind the Iroquois, that the blow aimed at your heads should fall upon ours."

Colonel Rossiter knew the reputation of Red Jacket as a poltroon, and he was nettled by these unjust words.

"When there is any running to be done, Red Jacket is always in the lead. He is great with his tongue, but greater with his heels."

The sachem had charged the British as a whole with deserting their Iroquois allies, but Colonel

Rossiter accused Red Jacket personally of being a coward. Unless a coward, he would resent the charge.

As the interpreter made a direct translation of the words (possibly with a grim enjoyment of his own), the dusky countenance seemed to flush under its paint, and the sachem suddenly sprang to his feet, with his hand upon his tomahawk. Colonel Rossiter rose at the same instant and held his pistol half-drawn. Little Billy looked up at both, as if it was all very entertaining to him.

The situation, apparently so tragic in its nature, was not lacking in its comic features. The Seneca looked fiercely at the white man, as if hurriedly debating the quickest way to slay him. The white man calmly confronted him, as if the question had no special interest to him. Red Jacket was frightened by the bold front of the other. When he expected the colonel to be cowed in the presence of two armed Senecas, he defied him.

With that calm dignity which never quite forsook the sachem, he resumed his seat and inquired:

"Where shall the white men and Iroquois make a stand against the Americans?"

"At the best spot that can be selected. Red Jacket and his people should know."

"There is no place near here; every American sleeps with one of his eyes open. Red Jacket crept into their camp last night, and saw for himself."

Colonel Rossiter would have complimented the Seneca on his daring but for the fact that he did not believe his statement. The idea of Red Jacket worming his way into the camp of the vigilant Americans was too preposterous to be credited, even by his most ardent partisans.

At this point in the conversation, Little Billy took upon himself to offer a suggestion:

"There is a spot beyond the camp of General Clinton—the white men will reach it when the sun has passed part way down the sky—that will serve as a trap for the American soldiers."

"Yes," growled Colonel Rossiter, "if they are fools enough to walk into the trap. What do you think about it, Red Jacket?"

"My brother means the place that he and I have talked about?" he said, looking inquiringly at Little Billy, who nodded his head and grunted an affirmative.

"It is a good spot—there can none be found any better."

It should be stated at this point that after the little flurry between the English colonel and the Seneca sachem, both talked considerably louder than before, and the fact was unfortunate for the parties themselves, and very welcome and fortunate for a certain friend of ours who was crouching only a few paces distant, breathlessly listening to every word.

"Then we shall make our fight there," was the emphatic comment of Colonel Rossiter. "I recall the place; it is very strong; we can muster more than a thousand men, counting your Indians, and all will be well armed, and will fight as bravely as any men in the world can fight."

"The Iroquois will do so," was the sour remark of the sachem.

"And Red Jacket will have a chance to place himself at their head, and teach the warriors who are younger than he how to fire the rifle, hurl the tomahawk, and use the scalping-knife," remarked the Colonel, again resting his hand on his pistol, and alert for any movement of the dusky sachem.

The latter, however, did not seem to hear the slur, but rose to his feet with the calmness of the summer day itself. The officer and Little Billy did the same, for all were impressed with the truth that enough had been said. Nothing more was to be gained by discussion. So far as Red Jacket and his companions were concerned, the spot where the attempt was to be made to ambuscade General Sullivan was settled. It only remained, therefore, to complete the preparations for repeating the Braddock disaster of nearly a quarter of a century before.

"Let Red Jacket hasten to his people," said the Colonel, "and I will hasten to mine; neither of us will lose any time."

"The woods are full of our enemies," said Red Jacket; "let my brother go with us, that we may take care of him."

"From what I have learned of Red Jacket," replied the officer, who evidently did not entertain a very profound respect for the Seneca, "he will have all he can do to take care of himself. I will go alone."

It is not impossible that Colonel Rossiter believed himself safer when away from Red Jacket than in his company. Be that as it may, and no matter what the feelings of the sachem might have been, he and Little Billy strode off in one direction, not once looking behind them, though the officer stood calmly gazing after them until they passed from sight among the trees. Then, with a significant smile on his bearded face, he moved in a directly opposite direction, his action showing that he intended to maintain a goodly distance between him and the Seneca orator, in whom he placed precious little confidence.

Colonel Rossiter went up the side of the hollow with a brisk step, and was walking at his ordinary gait through the forest when an astounding thing took place. From behind the trunk of a large chestnut, only a few paces in front, a person stepped quietly into sight and, with his rifle levelled, said in a low but peremptory voice:

COLONEL ROSSITER AND JACK. *Page 175.*

"Halt!"

It hardly need be said that the order was promptly obeyed. As a military man, Colonel Rossiter knew the peril of refusal under the circumstances. As he did so, he could not repress an exclamation of amazement, for, instead of a full-grown man who had thus halted him, it was a boy!

True, he was a large boy, but his smooth face and juvenile appearance left no doubt that he was still in his teens. That such was the fact, the reader will understand when he is told that the young gentleman who thus brought Colonel Rossiter to book was Jack Ripley, who had scarcely lost a word of the conversation between the officer and Red Jacket, and when the sentences, too, are recalled, it will be admitted that they were of the highest importance.

"Well, I 'll be hanged! If this does n't beat the bugs!" muttered the prisoner, staring at his youthful captor. "What do you want of me?"

"You are my prisoner," replied Jack, keeping his weapon levelled.

"I guess not," said the officer, slipping his hand to his side where he carried his pistol.

"Stop!" commanded Jack. "If you draw that pistol, I 'll fire!"

The situation certainly was serious. The Colonel snatched his hand away as if the butt had blistered

his fingers. Then he realized how matters stood, and, strange as it may seem, he smiled.

"Well, I must confess that you have me foul, young man. I am in a ridiculous position, but fortunately am not yet delivered into your camp, and don't think I shall be for some time to come."

"I don't see any reason for your confidence. General Sullivan is not so very far off, and I will give you the choice of walking quietly there or being shot: which shall it be?"

Colonel Rossiter smiled again. His discomfiture was unquestionably complete, and yet there was something in the idea of his being made captive by an American lad that appealed to his sense of the humorous.

"Colonel," said Jack Ripley, who did not understand why the man should take the matter so lightly, "you can see that my rifle is pointed at you. I have only to press the trigger a little harder to send the bullet through your body. I should dislike very much to do that, and it will not be my fault if I fire; it rests with you. If you will walk straight ahead as I tell you, no harm shall come to you. Which do you intend to do?"

Colonel Rossiter, standing less than fifty feet distant, looked searchingly at the boy. Doubtless he was debating with himself as to the best means of sweeping him from his path; but it must be

admitted that the problem was a difficult one. To repeat an expression already used, and quite common in these later days, Jack Ripley had the drop on his man.

"Do you know who I am?" asked the latter in a lower voice, keeping his gaze steadily on the youth.

"Only that you are a colonel in the British army, as I see from your uniform."

"You are right. My name is Howard Rossiter, Colonel of his Majesty's —— Foot."

"I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Colonel," replied the lad, who now felt something of the humor of the situation.

"Yes; confoundedly more pleased than I am to make *yours*," growled the officer.

"My name is Jack Ripley," said the youth; "but I am only a private in the American army. If I ever become a colonel, I shall be proud, indeed."

"No doubt you will be a major-general in a few years. But you Americans have no more money than you need."

"I never knew any one to have so much as that. Our people are fighting, not for money, but for liberty, and are willing to suffer hunger and privation."

"You have the greatest chance of your life to

make a fortune. If you will lower that infernal gun, and call it quits, I will pay you a thousand——"

"Colonel Rossiter, stop right there! It is best you should not finish that sentence. I am growing tired of holding my gun at a level. My finger is on the trigger; shall I press it a little harder, or do you prefer to submit? Take your choice."

At this point, an interesting question presents itself. Suppose Colonel Rossiter had absolutely refused to submit, and had defied his young captor, what would Jack Ripley have done? Years later, the direct question was put to him by his father, and the reply was prompt:

"I shoot Colonel Rossiter! Never! I know I should have been justified by the laws of warfare, but not for a moment did I have such a thought. I remember that when I stood with my gun pointed, and my finger on the trigger, I kept the muzzle so high that if it had been fired the bullet would have passed over his head. He was a handsome man, and old enough to have a boy of my age. I asked myself how I would feel if his son should shoot *you* down, father."

"God bless you!" replied Colonel Ripley, laying his hand on the head of his boy. "I am proud of you."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHECKMATED.

COLONEL HOWARD ROSSITER was a man of sense. It was humiliating thus to be captured by a boy, but the cold hard fact was before him, and he had no choice.

"I acknowledge myself your prisoner, Jack. Do you wish me to hand over my sword and pistol?"

"If you will give me your pledge not to attempt to use them against me, you may keep them."

"You have my word of honor that I will do as you wish."

"That is all I ask," said Jack, immediately lowering his rifle. "Come forward, please, Colonel."

The smile again lit up the face of the officer, but as he approached his conqueror he extended his hand.

"Unfortunate as I have been, I cannot help complimenting you on your exploit. Certainly, few boys can boast of making prisoner an officer of the opposing army."

"I sympathize too much with you, Colonel, ever to boast of what was only a lucky chance on my

part. Such a thing would not be likely to happen again in a hundred years."

"I should hope not. Be good enough to tell me how the mischief it *did* happen."

The two began walking side by side, as if they were old friends, but Jack Ripley took care that the course led in the direction of the main body of General Sullivan's army. He could not feel at ease for some time to come, since he was liable to meet enemies, in which event he would have to change situations with Colonel Rossiter.

"I was out with one of our scouts, when we separated to work each for himself. We knew some of the Iroquois were near, for we had worked well over to the left of our flanking party, and so were as careful as we could be. By nothing but the merest accident in the world I found myself within a few paces of the fallen tree in the hollow, just as you, Red Jacket, and the other Seneca sat down. I was so near, indeed, that I did not dare attempt to leave, lest you should see me. So I hid myself, and waited until you should go away. You can understand what an unlucky thing it would have been for me if Red Jacket and his friend had started toward me, instead of taking the opposite course."

"It might have proved unpleasant, for it is n't likely they would have shown you the consideration you gave me."

A sudden thought flashed upon Colonel Rossiter.

"I suppose you heard what passed between us?"

"I saw you stand up in front of Red Jacket when he tried to frighten you, but did not succeed," replied Jack Ripley, evading the question; for, as has been intimated, hardly a word of the important conversation escaped him.

"Bah! That fellow is a hulking coward, and I can't understand how it is he has so much influence with his people."

"It is because he is such a wonderful orator. He is like all the bands of our army united in rousing the others to fight."

"I never had much opinion of him; but we have to defer to him, since he possesses so much influence among his people. Then I assume you heard what was said by him and me, with the help of Little Billy, the interpreter."

Picking their way side by side through the wood, chatting as if friends of years, Jack Ripley looked sideways at his companion, who was but slightly taller than himself, and smiled:

"There can be no objection to your assuming that, Colonel, but——"

At that moment the startling crack of a rifle sounded from a point only a few rods in advance. The two instantly halted, and started in the

direction. Jack instinctively grasped his gun, and Colonel Rossiter laid his hand on his sword.

The two stood on the border line, as may be said, for the advance was not far enough to take them beyond danger of colliding with some of the prowling Iroquois; and yet it was possible that such was the fact. Whoever it was that had fired the shot, he must be a friend of either the officer or the youth. The latter had no wish to change places with his companion; but, if it were done, it was fortunate in one sense for the youth, since he was assured of honorable treatment from Colonel Rossiter under the changed conditions.

What the report of the gun meant was never known to either, since it was the only suspicious sound that reached them. No cry followed it, as would have been the case had a member of the American race been stricken, and the only other noises heard came from the advancing armed bodies, fully a mile beyond.

Jack Ripley was prudent enough to make a sharp divergence in the course they were following, so that the suspicious point was left well to their left. Within the following half hour, the couple were challenged by the outer guards of the American army, and, making himself known, Jack Ripley was conducted with his prisoner to the presence of General Sullivan, who had halted for the regular noon

rest, the junction with General Clinton, already referred to, not taking place until later in the afternoon.

The sight of the British officer making his way through the camp, accompanied by the lad, attracted considerable curiosity and speculation. A number of prisoners had already been captured, and were safely guarded, but the only instance of any of them being brought in singly was the one described.

General Sullivan was seated on a log, eating his noonday lunch in true democratic fashion, several of his staff similarly employed around him, when Jack Ripley and Colonel Rossiter were conducted into his presence.

"General, I am glad to see you doing so well," said the prisoner, saluting the commander, who rose to his feet and looked at him curiously for a moment.

"Am I mistaken in believing this is Colonel Rossiter?" asked the astonished General, glancing inquiringly from him to Jack Ripley, as if in doubt which ought to answer the question.

"I am sorry to say you are not mistaken. It happens that I have been made prisoner by this young gentleman attached to your command; at your service, sir," and again the Colonel saluted and bowed.

Laying down the food upon which he was

engaged, General Sullivan stepped forward and offered his hand.

"I can truly say you have my sympathy, Colonel."

"Because I am a prisoner, or because I was made so by a boy?" asked Colonel Rossiter, with his old smile.

"Because of your misfortune in being a prisoner. That it fell to the lot of Jack Ripley to escort you to our camp was a piece of good fortune."

"I am constrained to agree with you, for none could have treated me more kindly, and I am proud to say so in the presence of yourself and officers. My experience is not one of which to be proud——"

"There, there, Colonel, never mind about that," interrupted General Sullivan; "it is a part of the fortunes of war. Sit right down here at our table, and join us at dinner. Time enough to talk of that afterwards. If my recollection serves me right, it is not so very long since I received considerable kindness at *your* hands."

Colonel Rossiter knew to what his host referred. General Sullivan was partly responsible for the disaster on Long Island, when the American army was almost cut to pieces. He fought with the utmost desperation, but was made prisoner. The officer principally concerned in his capture was Colonel Rossiter, and he treated the American general with

the utmost consideration until he was exchanged. Therefore, in the present instance, Sullivan was actuated largely by gratitude for favors previously received.

There was no more ceremony in the meal to which the prisoner sat down than in the one of sweet potatoes upon which Marion, "the Swamp Fox," and the British officer as his guest, dined in one of the thickets of South Carolina. In the instance before us, however, the repast was more sumptuous; for General Sullivan never failed to have his commissary department well looked after. There were cold meat and coarse, palatable bread in abundance, with a liberal supply of rich cow's milk. No coffee or warm food, however, appeared, since the noon halt was too brief to permit of the preparation of the refreshing drink. Old campaigners would have been charmed with the meal, and the guest complimented it.

"If you would like some wine, you have only to name the brand," said Sullivan. Then, observing the wondering expression on the face of Colonel Rossiter, he added, with a twinkle of his black eyes, "you will be as likely to get one kind as another."

"The selection is too much of a task for me," replied the Colonel, munching his bread and meat; "let us defer our wine until the good days when King George shall welcome back his American

colonies as they were before that little misunderstanding at Lexington and Concord."

"Then I am sorry to say, Colonel, that you and I will never touch glasses," remarked the commanding officer, with a compression of his lips and an unmistakable earnestness of manner. "If you will change your proposal so as to make it when the thirteen States shall be free and independent, I shall be most happy to make the engagement with you."

"In that case, General, will not the date be removed to an equally indefinite period in the future?"

"By no means; a year or two, at the furthest."

"Very well," laughed the prisoner, who seemed to be in unusually good spirits for one in his situation; "it is an engagement, and may God grant that your life may be spared for many years to come!"

"I thank you, and heartily reciprocate your good wishes."

Now, while it was not in accordance with strict military etiquette for General Sullivan to invite a private of his army to take dinner with him, especially in the presence of his officers, it must not be supposed that throughout this pleasant interchange of courtesies between General Sullivan and Colonel Rossiter, Jack Ripley, who was blessed with a more

vigorous appetite than either, was permitted to stand looking idly on. While there was strict discipline in many cases in the Continental armies, in others the question of rank was often ignored to such an extent as to excite ridicule among their opponents. This may not always have been wise, but, all the same, our forefathers won their independence, and that, too, within the time set by General Sullivan, and the rule in the affairs of this world is, on the whole, to judge by results.

Accordingly, there was no surprise shown when the commanding general insisted that Jack Ripley should find room for himself upon the same log which served as a seat and table for host and guest. It must be confessed, too, that the young man did not require urging. He was sure he never felt more ahungered in all his life.

"It seems to me," he thought, "that I could spend the whole day in eating, and then not get all I want. I hope General Sullivan has enough supplies with him, for if the rest of his men are as ravenous as I, they will soon start a famine."

The good taste of the youth prevented his intruding any remarks of his own, though he was amused by the conversation between the two officers, as were the others seated around in picturesque attitudes.

For a few minutes, Jack Ripley gave his whole

attention to disposing of the food, of which he was furnished a bountiful supply, but by and by his ears were wider open than ever.

"Colonel Rossiter, I recall with gratitude the kindness you showed me three years ago this month on Long Island," said General Sullivan, when the humble repast was completed.

"It is hardly entitled to such reference, since each of us claims to belong to a civilized nation."

"Nevertheless, there are exceptions to the conduct I have named."

It was on the tongue of the American commander to denounce the employment of the Indians, especially the desperate fighters among the Iroquois, by the British in their warfare against the States; but he felt that that was neither the time nor place, and it would be a display of bad taste on his part thus to address a man who was his prisoner. Moreover, Colonel Rossiter was not responsible for the act, which was a discredit to the English authorities. The host therefore refrained, and added:

"If it is your desire, I will parole you."

"I shall be greatly pleased to give you my parole."

At this juncture, Jack Ripley showed great embarrassment. He set down the "blue plate" from which he had been eating, and rose from the log. Taking a step forward, he hesitated, then recoiled and stood still with flushed face. His action was so

singular that General Sullivan and Colonel Rossiter looked wonderingly at him, and the commander asked, in a kindly voice:

"Well, Jack, my boy, what is it?"

CHAPTER XIX.

SHARP WORK.

THE embarrassment of Jack Ripley lasted for several moments. He was on the point of apologizing and resuming his seat on the log, when a sense of duty asserted itself, and he remained standing. The two officers continued looking curiously at him, silent and expectant. General Sullivan repeated his invitation for him to speak.

"You will pardon me for my forwardness, but—General—it will not do to parole Colonel Rossiter."

"Not do to parole Colonel Rossiter!" repeated the commander; "and will you be good enough to tell me *why?*"

"I overheard his conversation with Red Jacket a while ago. I heard them make an agreement where the British, Tories, and Indians are to attempt to ambuscade our army. Colonel Rossiter knows that I know it. If you parole him, and he goes back to his friends, though he will not fight against us until he is exchanged, yet he will warn our enemies that their plans are known, and they will fix upon some other place which we may not be able to turn."

The astonished General Sullivan emitted a low whistle. Colonel Rossiter's face turned crimson, for the very scheme that had been exposed was in his mind.

"Ah! That puts a different face on matters. I presume, Colonel, the young man is not mistaken? I leave it to you to answer."

"I must decline to do so," replied the prisoner, trying to hide his vexation.

"Your declination is a confirmation of his words. Under the circumstances, you must permit me to withdraw my offer. I regret it, but I shall have to retain you until this little business is settled."

"As you please, sir."

"But you shall not be permitted to complain of our unkindness."

"It is unnecessary to state that. A British officer could fall into no more pleasant hands than those of General Sullivan."

"Thank you," said the commander, bowing, while Jack Ripley, with a mixed feeling of meanness and of pleasure over duty done, quietly reseated himself.

The incident, seemingly slight of itself, opened a chasm between the American commander and his prisoner. If possible, they were more courteous and deferential to each other than before; but on the one hand was extreme annoyance at being

baffled in a far-reaching scheme, and on the other a self-disgust that his intended kindness had come so nigh resulting ill for the army under his command.

General Sullivan determined to keep his man in safe custody until the end of the campaign. Under ordinary circumstances, that would have been the only course to take, since Colonel Rossiter's coming into camp had given him an extensive knowledge that would have been of extreme value to the enemy; but it so happened that, as in the case of Red Jacket, the knowledge was of the kind that the American commander wished to be known to his adversary. The strength of the invaders was so overwhelming that it might serve to deter the resistance that otherwise would have been certain.

The meal was completed, and it was time to resume the march. Colonel Rossiter was turned over to the custody of the proper guard, with instructions to take every precaution against his escape. General Sullivan and his staff remounted, and, by his direction, Jack Ripley was provided with a horse and rode at his side.

"Now, my young friend," said he, when the opportunity for free conversation came, "I want you to give me the particulars of your capture of Colonel Rossiter. You can understand that, out of consideration for him, I avoided reference to it while he was present."

Jack told his story with a modesty that was natural to him, insisting that it was by the merest of accidents that he was enabled to make a prisoner of the British officer.

"All the same, it was a mighty clever exploit, since, when you did it, Red Jacket and the other Seneca could not have been far off. But I am specially anxious to know of the conversation between Colonel Rossiter and Red Jacket. You are convinced that you heard it all?"

"I heard all that took place after they reached the hollow and sat down on the fallen tree; but what was said before, of course, is unknown to me."

"Why are you sure that you lost nothing?"

"I saw them arrive and seat themselves, and I kept my place until they parted company, the Senecas going one way and the Colonel another. You understand, General, that the translation of the words was a help to me."

"How?"

"I have noticed that when a man is trying to make himself understood by a person who does not know his language, he is apt to speak louder. Have n't you noticed the same thing?"

"I believe I have," replied the commander, smiling at the simplicity and shrewdness of the lad, for whom he had formed a strong attachment.

"But where, all this time, was your friend, Jed Stiffens?"

"I have n't the slightest idea. We left camp very early this morning, but had not gone a mile when he proposed that we part company."

"Was there no understanding between you?"

"None, except that each was to do the best he could. Jed and I have a system of signals by which we can communicate when not too far apart, but I have n't heard any of his to-day. He is doing good work *somewhere.*"

"There is no question as to that; but it must be said that Red Jacket and his companion did not locate very definitely the place where they intend to try their ambuscade upon us."

"They gave it no name, but its distance was fixed closely enough for Jed to understand. When he hears what was said, he won't have any trouble about that. Besides, he may have been as lucky as I."

"I don't see how that could well be. He could n't have been near you, for you would have discovered him, and what he heard would inevitably have been the same as what reached you."

"I mean, that he may have been able to catch something said among the Indians or white leaders. You know he understands the tongues used by the Iroquois as well as he does his own."

"But what was said by Red Jacket and Colonel Rossiter indicates that they were the first and probably the only ones to reach the decision about the ambuscade."

"Several hours have passed since then, and Jed may pick up a good deal between now and night."

Now, it so happened that the experience of Jed Stiffens on that memorable afternoon was in direct contrast to his young friend's.

It has been shown that it was an article of faith with the scout that when from any cause he failed to obey his "promptings," disaster was sure to follow. True, it sometimes overtook him when he obeyed that mysterious impulse, which, after all, may have had a logical basis; but that did not affect his belief, since such disaster was bound to come anyway.

His separation from Jack Ripley, as he explained to his young friend, was in obedience to his promptings from within, and, urged by the same impulse, he circled to the left of the American army, which was the same course that Jack took, except that the latter went farther to the westward. It would have been more prudent had he followed in the footsteps of Jack, but the reader does not need to be reminded that Jed Stiffens was fond of taking risks.

Perhaps it was not singular that the primal business of Jed was to find the information that had come to the youth unsought. There was no danger

of the enemy attempting an ambuscade for a day or two to come, but that they would resort to their favorite artifice, which has so often proven fatal to white men, Jed considered as certain as that the sun would rise. His wish, therefore, was to ascertain where such a demonstration was intended.

How could he learn ?

Only one method suggested itself: to catch some expression from the Indians or white men that would yield the secret. Of course his intimate knowledge of the Indian tongues was vastly in his favor, but the chances of his gaining an opportunity to overhear a secret of that nature were so remote that it seemed to be folly to hope for success.

In the first place, it would be about impossible to steal near enough to a group of Iroquois to overhear their words without being instantly detected. Then, in case of success, what reason had the scout to believe the subject under discussion by the Indians would be of a nature to afford the information he sought ?

In short, it looked very much as if the daring fellow had undertaken a contract in which he would find himself unable to deliver the goods. Nevertheless, he went about the task with the grim resolution that marked everything he took in hand.

One of the cardinal virtues of a scout is patience. It is a historical record that the two most famous

pioneers of Kentucky, Daniel Boone and Simon Kenton, once arrived on opposite sides of the Ohio River, just as the sun was rising. Each became aware at the same moment that a person was on the other bank, and the time and circumstances warranted the suspicion that he was an enemy. They therefore set to work to ascertain the truth, and just as the sun was dipping below the horizon, the intimate friends discovered themselves to each other.

When noon came and passed, Jed Stiffens had not made the slightest progress in his task, but his determination to persevere was as strong as ever. He had caught glimpses, more than once, of Iroquois flitting among the trees, and it necessitated lively work on his part to avoid a collision with them. Several times he had the opportunity of leaping upon one of the red men, and bearing him to the earth, with the presumption that he could be compelled to disgorge his secret (provided he possessed it), but such information would always remain open to the fear that it was untrustworthy.

However, the afternoon was yet young, when the scout fancied his chance had come. In the densest part of the wood he caught sight of five Senecas standing and consulting together. They seemed to have met in obedience to some understanding, and the animated gestures showed that they were discussing something with great earnestness.

What more likely than that they were talking over their scheme for ambuscading the invading army ?

It was necessary to edge a good deal nearer, and, making sure that no one was behind him, the scout stole forward with a skill that could not have been surpassed. The difficulty of this work can hardly be imagined, for in gliding from tree to tree he was compelled to expose himself to observation, if by chance one of the five turned his eyes in the direction of the white man. Jed overcame the apparently insurmountable difficulty by studying the group from behind a tree until able to foretell by a few seconds the pose and action he was likely to take. As it was, the risk was fearful, but he overcame it with a success that seemed incredible, and continued working closer and closer until half the intervening space was passed.

Realizing that each moment was liable to bring discovery, Jed's purpose was to make a dash for freedom, and, with a slight start and his wonderful fleetness, he was confident of getting safely away. As it was, he had reached a point which enabled him to catch a word now and then of the speakers, and he felt that one or two more moves would take him to the coign of vantage, where he could gain an intelligible knowledge of the discussion that was as earnest as ever.

It was at this juncture, when hope was so clearly defined, that the catastrophe came.

In obedience to his habits of caution, the scout, while awaiting the moment to make another venture, glanced behind him to learn whether the coast was clear in that direction. One look was sufficient. Red Jacket, Young King, Captain Pollard, Little Billy, and six warriors were walking directly toward him. Not only that, but they were spread apart so as to cover a line twenty yards in length, and each wing was more advanced than the centre. He was caught between two fires, and virtually surrounded.

True, he could make a dash to the right or left, but to do so would bring him within a few paces of his enemies, while to run to the front or rear insured a "head-on" collision. Every Iroquois was armed with a rifle, and the glimpse he first caught revealed that two of Red Jacket's party were Onondagas, fully as dangerous as the Senecas. On the first attempt to run, the Indians would open fire, and where all were good marksmen it was impossible that more than one or two should miss.

The course adopted by Jed Stiffens was extraordinary, and was another proof of his marvellous coolness in moments of the greatest peril.

CHAPTER XX.

CUNNING AND DUPLICITY.

WITHOUT the least evidence of fright, and within the first five seconds of the discovery of his fearful peril, Jed Stiffens wheeled around and strode in the direction of Red Jacket and his party. His gait was his usual one, and he carried his gun in a trailing position to signify that his disposition was peaceful.

"It 's my promptin's to do so," he muttered; "but, by gracious! if I ain't runnin' my head into a b'ar's mouth *this* time, my name ain't Jed Stiffens!"

The action of the scout was so unexpected that the Iroquois halted, and two of them raised their rifles as if about to fire. The white man loftily waved them aside and continued his deliberate advance.

At the same moment, the party now thrown to the rear of the scout became aware of the remarkable state of affairs, and started toward the white man, whose situation was thereby rendered more helpless than before.

Jed fixed his eyes on Red Jacket, who, it need not be said, was surveying him intently and with anything but kindly feelings. When a couple of rods separated them, Jed made a military salute, and said:

"I would speak to my brother, the great Red Jacket, sachem of the Senecas. I bring him words that are for his ear alone."

Red Jacket was more mystified than ever. Instead of going forward, he stood irresolute, but with his gaze upon the white man, who now beckoned to him to approach. There was something so commanding in the gesture that he obeyed, though with evident reluctance, for he held the terrible scout in dread, and did not relish the thought of placing himself in his power, even when so many of his friends were within instant call.

He and Jed never once removed their eyes from each other's face until the sachem halted eight or ten feet distant, prepared to leap back and run if the scout attempted to approach closer. The Iroquois beyond, being in Jed's field of vision, he could see were motionless and mute gazing upon the remarkable scene.

"Come no nearer," said Red Jacket, in a voice so low that only the ears for which the words were intended caught them.

"I have no wish to harm my brother," replied

Jed, in the same guarded voice; "but I come from General Sullivan, the Father of the great army that is marching through the woods to burn the villages of the Six Nations."

(All of which was strictly true.)

"Has he any message for Red Jacket?"

"He has something to tell Red Jacket that no one else must hear."

"Red Jacket's ears are open."

"But the words cannot be spoken here. They must be said to Red Jacket, my great brother, by the Father of the army that is like the leaves on the trees."

As may be supposed, Jed Stiffens was studying the painted face of the sachem with all the skill he possessed. That which he saw, though faintly defined, was favorable.

"Does my brother wish to have his lodge and his wife and children and his crops spared by the white man? Does he wish to receive the wampum of the great Father? Then let him come to the tent of the Father when the moon is high in the sky to-night."

(All of which was a monumental fib, and the white man was now drawing things with a tremendously long bow).

"What is it the great Father has to say to me?" asked the sachem, his duplicity and greed awakened.

Unconsciously he took a step nearer. Joe Stiffens scored a point, which only needed to be followed up promptly.

"He forbade me to say the words to Red Jacket, for the leaves might hear; but in the tent of the Father all will be safe, for there are no leaves to listen. The Father will say his words to me, and I will say them to the great sachem in his own tongue, and no other shall know of them. They will make the heart of Red Jacket glad."

"Did my brother come to look for Red Jacket?"

"I have been hunting for him all day."

The question of the Seneca indicated that a grain of doubt lingered in his mind, and the white man saw he must strike while the iron was hot.

"The Father is waiting to hear what message Red Jacket sends back to him. What shall I say to the Father at the head of our armies?"

"Tell him Red Jacket will come when the moon is high in the sky to-night."

"The great sachem of the Senecas is wise. His words shall be told to the Father, and his eyes will not be closed to-night until they have looked upon Red Jacket."

Then Jed Stiffens made an elaborate military salute, and, still carrying his rifle in a trailing position, he walked away! In doing so, he did not glance to the right or left, though nearly all the

transfixed warriors were in his field of vision, and he was on the alert for a demonstration from them.

It was a most extraordinary proceeding, but it was the statue-like pose of Red Jacket that held his Senecas motionless while the most hated of white men, well known by reputation and recognized by all, coolly strode off into the woods. The impressive manner of the scout must have cast something in the nature of a spell over the sachem, aided by the cunning deception of the white man; but the latter knew that the strange influence could last but a brief time. It was liable to be broken at any moment, and when the break did come, the last desperate struggle would be on.

Never was there more call for self-restraint and control than when the scout was leaving the spot in the deliberate manner described. Where everything depended upon placing a safe distance between him and his enemies, the temptation to break into a run was almost irresistible; but the certainty that the instant he did so the whole horde of redskins would be after him like a cyclone, firing as they sped, kept the lithe, sinewy limbs moving with the regularity of an automaton until more than a hundred yards intervened between him and the nearest enemy.

Then Jed Stiffens could contain himself no longer. With a defiant whoop, he bounded several

feet into the air, and was off like an arrow from the bow. That shout and that leap dissipated the hypnotic spell resting on the group. Instantly they answered the cry with shouts, several guns were fired, and the whole party dashed forward on his trail like so many hounds after the fleeing deer.

The scout was so far off when he made his break that the intervening trees spoiled the aim of his pursuers, though more than one bullet cut the twigs and leaves about his head, and urged him to the highest speed of which he was capable. It has been said that he possessed wonderful fleetness, and never did he run faster than when dashing in and out among the trees, for he knew he was speeding for life.

Among the noted attainments of Red Jacket was also his fleetness of foot. One of the first presents he received from a British officer, when a mere youth, was a crimson waistcoat for the swiftness he displayed in carrying messages. The Seneca was so proud of the garment that he wore a similar one for many years—a fact that gave him the English name by which he is best known.

Among the pursuers, Red Jacket was the best runner of all, and yet not once did he lead the procession streaming after the fugitive. In truth, several of his companions passed him, and maintained the advance, although when the sachem

aimed and fired his gun at the scout he strove his best to bring him down. Moreover, he came nearer doing it than any of the other marksmen, for his bullet nipped the ear of Jed Stiffens; but, somehow or other, the Seneca seemed unable to draw away from the main party. That he possessed the ability to do so cannot be denied, and his failure must be attributed to his fear of overtaking the terrible white man. His predicament was similar to that of the hunter who, after pursuing a grizzly bear for a couple of days, suddenly ceased and turned back for the reason that the trail was becoming too fresh.

Enough perhaps has been told to make clear the termination of the chase. For several minutes the gaunt form of the scout was discerned darting in and out among the trees, which became more numerous between pursuers and fugitive until only occasional glimpses were caught of him, and finally he disappeared altogether.

The Indians kept up the pursuit but a short time longer; for, much as they yearned to capture the scalp of the man who had wrought them so much evil, they knew when it became impossible to do so, and gave over the effort; their next move being in the nature of strategy. A number of them turned to the right and others to the left, and, acting on the assumption that the white man would soon change the course he was following, they aimed to

head him off. Had they succeeded, we should be compelled to admit that Jed Stiffens did not merit his reputation as the greatest scout connected with the American army.

What the thoughts of Red Jacket were when finally the scattered group came together near the spot where the chase had begun can only be conjectured from the incidents that followed. He looked around and saw that every man was there, proof that all attempts to overtake the scout were abandoned.

Not only was the whole party present, but one of the most notable leaders of the Six Nations had come from somewhere, in the person of the famous half-breed, Cornplanter, one of the bravest of men, who read Red Jacket like a book. From the nature of the environments of the two, they were in a certain sense rivals. Among all the tribes, there was not a man or woman who did not know that Cornplanter was immeasurably the superior as a warrior of Red Jacket, and no more striking proof of the wonderful power of the sachem's gift of oratory can be given than that he not only retained his supremacy, but grew in influence, and that, too, in the face of his numerous exhibitions of cowardice.

Cornplanter was in a rage. His black eyes snapped fire, and the paint on his stern countenance seemed to take on a more fiery hue. He knew

what had occurred, and he accepted it as a proof of the treachery and duplicity of the famous sachem of the Senecas. Yet Cornplanter exhibited admirable self-restraint. Fixing his burning gaze upon the face of Red Jacket, he asked the meaning of what had just taken place. A liberal translation of their conversation may be given.

"The dog of a white man was a prisoner of Red Jacket. Why was he allowed to go to his home? Was it the wish of Red Jacket that he should slay more of the true children of the Great Spirit?"

"The white dog lied to Red Jacket," was the reply, given with composure.

"But the white dogs *always* speak with a double tongue. Is Red Jacket a child, that he believes what they say to him?"

"He deceived Red Jacket; he would have deceived Ga-nio-di-euh [the Indian name of Cornplanter, meaning Handsome Lake, though it is sometimes spelled differently], for he told him he came from the Father of the American army that is marching toward the towns of the Six Nations."

"It was a foolish lie, for had he come from him, he would have shown the flag that is white. Did he carry such a flag?"

"The white men do not always carry the white flag, and the Iroquois have gone into their camp without it."

"What was his message to Red Jacket?" asked Cornplanter, still keeping his anger under good control.

"That the Father of the white men would make a treaty with the Iroquois if they would send their chiefs to him."

Cornplanter knew this was a falsehood, for the veriest child would understand that the American commander would not march a large army into the Indian country, and then halt at the door to offer a treaty to the people whom he had come so far to punish. But the war-chief was forced to dissemble. There were muttering and uneasiness among the listening warriors that showed the remarkable power Red Jacket held over them. Had a personal encounter taken place at that moment between the speakers, all would have rallied to the help of the orator. And that, too, when Cornplanter, as has been shown, was vastly the superior of the Seneca in every respect save the single one named.

The chief knew it, but his thoughts were busy, and he bided his time. He could not repress, however, a parting shot.

"When Red Jacket becomes older, he will gain wisdom, for now he is only a child. The white men are marching toward our towns, and we are needed. There is no time for us to tarry; let us make haste."

Cornplanter strode off to indicate the matter was

ended, and Red Jacket was relieved that such was the fact; for, had his rival pressed him closely, he would have found it hard to explain satisfactorily all he had done.

There must have been a lingering suspicion in his mind that the white scout had some warrant for the message he professed to bring from General Sullivan; for late that night Red Jacket, instead of going himself, sent a trusted messenger to the American commander to learn what he had to say.

But the sagacious Cornplanter suspected a move of that kind and was on the watch. He knew the meaning of the stealthy withdrawal of the messenger from camp, and he followed him without attracting attention to himself. Suffice it to say that the warrior speeding through the darkness never reached General Sullivan, for the reason that he was switched off upon a route which landed him in his happy hunting-grounds.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOG'S BACK.

THE time has come when a brief diversion must be made in order to give a few particulars concerning several individuals who now assume an active part in the historical incidents we are now narrating.

The reader has learned something of Red Jacket and General Sullivan, and enough has been told regarding the war-chiefs, Young King, Captain Pollard, and Little Billy. Cornplanter, who has been referred to as a half-breed, took a prominent part in the massacre of Braddock, and was therefore considerably older than Red Jacket. His dauntless bravery was never questioned. He was the most effective of the Indian leaders in opposing Sullivan's advance, and repeatedly exposed himself to death, but went through that terrific campaign without a scratch.

Although a ferocious enemy of the Americans all through the Revolution, Cornplanter faithfully adhered to the terms of peace, and became their devoted friend. He was a fine orator, but not the

equal of Red Jacket. The western Indians made strenuous efforts to draw him to their side in their wars toward the close of the century, but he refused, assisted in making treaties with the white people, did his utmost to aid in civilizing the Indians, and by his example and counsel did much to stay the ravages of intemperance among them. At his death, in 1836, respected by the whole American nation, he was more than one hundred years old.

Joseph Brant, another famous Indian leader, was a Mohawk sachem, and it is probable there was white blood in his veins. His native name was Thay-en-da-ne-ga. His brightness attracted the attention of Sir William Johnson, the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and he gave him a fair English education. He refused all persuasions to fight on the side of the Americans in the Revolution, and was one of their bitterest and most merciless enemies. He committed many shocking outrages, and at the battle of Oriskany tortured his prisoners, as he did in many other instances. Contrary to the general belief, Brant took no part in the Wyoming massacre of July 3, 1778, for the reason that he was just then similarly employed elsewhere.

Colonel John Butler was a prominent leader among the Tories, and the chief officer in the horrible Wyoming massacres. Great as was his savagery, he sometimes showed mercy to a conquered

foe; but it was different with his son, Captain Walter N. Butler, who was never known to display that weakness. It was he who planned and carried out the Cherry Valley slaughter a few months after that of Wyoming. Brant, Cornplanter, and Captain Butler were at the head of the forces opposing the advance of General Sullivan into the Indian country, and therefore merit this brief notice at our hands.

In a direct line between the beautiful Wyoming monument and the site of old Fort Wintermoot, on the brow of a high bank, supposed to be the former shore of the Susquehanna, the visitor to the lovely Wyoming Valley is shown a large stone, known as "Queen Esther's Rock," or "Bloody Rock." It rises about a foot and a half above the ground, and a portion of it is of a dull reddish color, a fact which had led to the superstition that the tint was caused by blood that soaked into the flinty substance.

Although nothing of the kind could have occurred, there is no question that blood was shed around the historic stone.

Catharine Montour, often referred to as "Queen Esther," was a half-breed who was educated in Canada. Possessing unusual brightness and beauty, she became for a time a social favorite in Philadelphia. Returning to the Seneca tribe, which she claimed as her own, she was treated as vastly superior to the rest of her sex. One of the towns

was named in her honor, and her residence was referred to as the palace. At this day, it would bear comparison with the majority of modern dwellings.

When there was talk of war, Queen Esther opposed it, but when it came she became one of its foremost and most savage leaders. She seemed to be controlled by an unquenchable hatred of the white people, and there was no atrocity to which she did not urge her warriors, and in many of which, when possible, she took a prominent part.

When the invasion of the Wyoming Valley occurred, in 1778, Catharine Montour was nearly eighty years old. Yet she eagerly went with the Indians and Tories, for she saw the prospect of witnessing and assisting in bringing suffering to the helpless and inoffensive settlers.

In the preliminary fighting the son of Queen Esther was killed. The fact filled her with demoniac rage against the white people, most of whom were old men, women, and children, the majority of the able-bodied adults being absent with the armies, fighting the battles of their country.

On the night after the defeat of the small force of patriots, sixteen prisoners were ranged in a circle around the rock described, awaiting death at the hands of the enraged Catharine Montour, or Queen Esther. Armed with a death-maul and hatchet, as the prisoners were seated one after the other on the

rock and held securely by two strong Indians, she began chanting a death dirge, and, using one of the deadly implements, dashed out the brains of her victims.

While the terrible tragedy was going on, two men, awaiting their turn, Lebbeus Hammond and Joseph Elliott by name, made a sudden break and dashed off at desperate speed. In the confusion neither was fired upon, but a number of warriors started in pursuit. Hammond made for the river, and, glancing over his shoulder, saw that the Indians were running with a view of heading him off. He changed his course, and was speeding with might and main when his toe caught in a root, and he rolled headlong down the bank, under the bushy head of a prostrate tree. Instantly it occurred to him that the best thing to do was to lie still, and he did so. In a short time, several of his enemies approached the spot, peering here and there, and came so close that he believed he must be betrayed by the beating of his heart; but they gave up the hunt, and, waiting until the way was clear, he cautiously entered the river, swam to Monocacy Island, and thence found his way to the fort of Wilkesbarre.

Meanwhile, Elliott plunged into the river, with the enemies directly behind him. He was a powerful swimmer, and kept under the water most of the

time, but whenever he rose to catch his breath he was fired upon, and received a painful wound in the shoulder. But he succeeded in reaching the other side of the river, where he found an estray horse, which he mounted, using the bark of a hickory sapling for a bridle. He reached the fort at Wilkesbarre ahead of Hammond, had his wound dressed, and the two lived many years afterwards to tell of their wonderful escape from the vengeance of Queen Esther of the Senecas.

Returning to the course of our narrative, it remains to be said that Jed Stiffens rejoined the advancing army late on the afternoon of his clever outwitting of Red Jacket, and reported his disappointment to General Sullivan. When he learned that the information he was seeking had been secured by Jack Ripley, he was delighted, and in his jocose manner proposed that he and the rest of the scouts should resign and turn over their work to the youth, who had been more successful than any of them. As for Jack, he blushed in his usual modest way, and begged his friend to talk of something else. From the words repeated to him by the lad, the veteran recognized the spot where the enemy intended to try to ambuscade the American army.

The next day, while Sullivan was pushing forward in his guarded manner, with flanking parties on each side of the line of march, and strong guards in

front and rear, word was brought back by Jed Stiffens and several scouts that the whole force of the enemy had made a stand at a place called Hog's Back, and were awaiting the approach of the invaders. The Iroquois were under the command of Cornplanter, Brant, and Red Jacket, and the Tories were led by Colonel Butler, his son the Captain, and Sir John Johnson, son of Sir William Johnson, who had died several years before.

The opposition thus offered to the American advance was more serious than would be supposed. The enemy numbered fully a thousand, and among them was a good sprinkling of British regulars, as the presence of Colonel Howard Rossiter indicated. Their left rested on Hog's Back, which was a hill, and their right on a ridge running parallel with the river. Regular and well-constructed intrenchments were thrown up, and they were fully a half mile in extent. In addition, the pines and scrub-oaks which covered the ground gave good protection. The works themselves were cunningly hidden by green boughs planted in front.

Before these formidable works, Sullivan halted and made his arrangements for attack. After thoroughly acquainting himself with the nature of the defences, he ordered General Hand and the rifle corps to assail in front while Generals Clinton and Poor cleared the hill on the Indian left.

Jack Ripley, by his own request, was assigned a place in the ranks of the rifle corps, where he was to receive his first baptism of fire. He took his place like a veteran, and, while waiting a few minutes for the order to advance, the man on his right, with the reckless coolness which soldiers often show in the moments of greatest peril, ventured upon a few words in an undertone.

"You look rather young, my son."

"I 'm sixteen years old," replied Jack, in the same guarded voice, for the conversation was contrary to rules.

"Is this your first battle?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you look mighty cool for a youngster. Ain't you scared?"

"Yes, I am; but I mean to do my duty."

"Good for you! If you had said you war n't scared, I 'd 've knowed you was lying, for the bravest man that ever lived always feels pokerish when the battle is 'bout to open."

"You don't look that way," ventured Jack.

"I am, all the same, and so is every one about us, though they try to look as if they did n't care a rush. But as soon as the shooting begins, it will be all over. The trouble, then, is to keep from diving ahead of the rest. My advice to you, young man, is to keep cool. Shout and yell if you want to, and

I don't b'leve you can help it; but don't run ahead of us, for, if you do, you 're purty sure to get plugged. Listen for orders, and do your best to obey 'em; but if—— "

At that instant the command rang out, and the riflemen sprang forward in their charge against the intrenchments. It seemed to Jack as if he were lifted entirely off his feet, and was treading on air. He heard the shouts about him, and unconsciously he hurrahed at the top of his lungs. Then the firing began, and what looked like inextricable confusion, though it was not, was all around him.

He saw the flame from the muzzles of the guns pointed over the breastworks; he heard the answering shouts from within them, and the air appeared to be full of smoke, flying objects, and whistling bullets. A slight twinge shot along his cheek, but in the fearful excitement he did not notice that it meant a bullet had grazed his face. He fired at the intrenchments, without selecting any special target, and then, almost instinctively, and in obedience to the instructions of Jed Stiffens, stood still and began reloading his rifle, which, of course, was unprovided with a bayonet like those around him.

He was surprised at his own coolness while doing this, but there was no nervousness nor mistake, though the operation was hurried. The moment, however, the powder was poured into the pan, and

the hammer drawn back ready for firing, he seemed to lose his senses. Again he yelled, and broke into a wild run directly up the slope in the face of the flaming outburst from the intrenchments. But for the halt he had made to reload his weapon, he would have been the first in leaping over the defences and among the men who were fighting hand to hand.

Letting fly at the first redskin at whom he saw a chance, Jack had no time to put another charge into his gun, but, clubbing it, he began laying about him with the lustiness of a young Hercules. Directly behind, and unseen by him, a brawny Onondaga bounded forward with upraised tomahawk, but, before he could bring it down, the veteran with whom Jack had been talking a short time before pinned the redskin to the earth with his bayonet.

"Keep your eyes all about you!" shouted the fellow in a voice that rose above the fearful din. Jack turned his head and saw how his friend had saved him. The man's face was crimsoned from a wound in the forehead, but he fought on with the same grim vigor and effectiveness as if wholly unharmed. With scarcely a pause, Jack was at it again, hitting, like an Irishman, at a head wherever it presented itself.

He struck something with his foot, and narrowly saved himself from falling. Glancing down, he saw

that it was a man limp and lifeless, his fighting ended forever. Others lay here and there, but most of them were Indians or Tories.

The fight for the possession of the intrenchments was as brief as it was terrific. The artillery played havoc among the defenders, and, as is always the case, it greatly frightened them. They gave ground, but, darting behind rocks, trees, and everything that afforded shelter, kept up a vicious fire as rapidly as they could reload and aim their guns.

But nothing could check the impetuosity of the Americans, who pressed their enemy resistlessly. The Indians and Tories would have broken and fled but for Brant, who darted here and there, shouting commands and encouragement to his men, and setting the example of absolute recklessness in exposing himself to death. That he escaped was incomprehensible, for more than one of the riflemen, all excellent shots, aimed carefully at the leader, whom they recognized as one of the most vicious miscreants of the Six Nations, whom all were eager to make bite the dust.

But the war-chief seemed to bear a charmed life, and so inspiring were his appeals that many of his followers feared him more than the assaulting columns. One warrior suddenly observed a white man dashing toward him, and turned in a panic to run. Two steps brought him to the side of Brant,

who drove his tomahawk deep into his brain, and then, raising the dripping weapon, he hurled it with frightful fierceness directly at the approaching soldier, who, unprepared for the terrible missile, received the blow in his chest and sank down, killed as quickly as the dusky coward a few feet away.

Stooping over, Brant snatched the tomahawk from the belt of the inanimate form at his feet, and dashed among his warriors, who again gave signs of yielding. Under his imperious commands they stood their ground, and some of the Americans wavered for a few minutes; but their leaders were fearless and skilful, and, placing themselves at the head of the soldiers, they led another charge which swept everything before them.

When Brant saw the bayonets bearing down upon him and his warriors, he raised the desparing cry, "Oonah! Oonnah!" and the same instant the whole force broke and fled in tumultuous confusion.

The battle was won, and, despite the furious fighting, the American loss was only six killed, though fully fifty were wounded, some of them dangerously.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FLAG OF TRUCE.

THE real horrors of battle are not seen in all their fulness until the fighting has ceased, and the oppressive lull follows. The burying of the dead, the caring for the wounded, the repairing of damages, so far as it is possible to repair them, the awful quiet, as friends gather and talk of those who have fallen, some of whom prepared their last messages before entering into the conflict, and intrusted their precious words and a few simple mementos to be sent to the loved and mourning ones, who will look in vain through the years that follow for the coming of those who left them in high spirits and with their hearts throbbing with hope. These and other melancholy experiences make men wonder why they should strive so fiercely to slay one another, and they sigh for the times that seem so far away in the future, when nations and peoples shall learn war no more.

As has been shown, the fighting at Hog's Back was desperate, but, fortunately, the losses among the Americans were much the same as when in these

later days our troops have encountered those of Spain. The dead were tenderly laid away to rest in mother earth, the wounded received the best attention possible, and preparations were hurried for forcing the advance on the morrow into the heart of the Indian country, across whose border the invading army had already passed.

Shortly after the defeat and flight of the Tories and Indians, a flag of truce arrived on the lines from Colonel Butler, with the request for permission to look after their dead and wounded. It was granted, as a matter of course, and while the lanterns of the Americans flickered here and there, as their parties engaged in their merciful work, the shadowy forms of the enemies were seen flitting hither and thither upon the same merciful errand. It was a strange situation, with the deadly enemies so near each other while no one raised his hand to offer violence; though, it must be confessed that something of the kind was expected from the Tories and Iroquois; and the fact that it did not take place was undoubtedly due more to fear than to any sense of humanity, or the rights of the white flag.

It is the custom of the Indians to carry away their dead for sepulture at their homes or far removed from the scene of battle. One of their villages stood near Hog's Back, and extensive fields of corn were growing so close at hand that some of

the missiles fell between the stalks. The battle itself diverted attention from everything else, but there could be no doubt that General Sullivan would remember them on the morrow.

By midnight not an enemy was in sight. All, including the wounded, had been removed, and it was not believed that any more serious trouble would occur, since the defeat of the Tories and Iroquois was decisive; but the turn of night had hardly passed when a second flag of truce presented itself at the lines, and permission was asked to see General Sullivan.

The bearers of this message were Red Jacket and a companion, who accompanied the sachem as his interpreter. His dislike of Jed Stiffens was too deep-seated to endure his presence; and probably it was as well that they did not meet, even in the presence of the American commander.

The latter was in conference with his leading officers in his tent when the message was brought to him. It will be remembered that it was on the second night succeeding the scout's remarkable escape from Red Jacket and his party.

General Sullivan's first impulse was to refuse the request, for he could not see what possible good was to result from the interview. He recalled, however, the instructions of Washington, to show consideration to the great Seneca orator, and he

therefore ordered that the visitor be brought into his presence, without blindfolding, either, for there was nothing they could learn that would give them encouragement to continue their resistance to the advance of the American army.

When, some fifteen minutes later, the two Senecas were presented at the door of the tent, the officer received them with that suave courtesy for which he was noted, taking each of the visitors by the hand, and bidding them be seated upon the chunks of wood that served for chairs.

The scene was much the same as when Red Jacket made his call a couple of nights before, though the locality was different. It was the same small tent, with a fire burning near the centre, and filling the interior with warmth and light. The afternoon had been cloudy, and toward night there was a perceptible chill in the air, so that the blaze was not as unwelcome as on the previous occasion.

Naturally, neither of the two Senecas carried any weapons, while Red Jacket had a blanket flung around his shoulders. His appearance undeniably was handsome and impressive, for his fine figure was erect and his step proud, while the midnight eyes had an intensity and piercing power not often seen, even among his own people, where such orbs are the rule.

The two were seated, in answer to the invitation of the officer, the companion placing himself between

the two, as was befitting in an interpreter. The officer recognized his function, and, looking at him, said:

"What is the errand of Red Jacket in coming to my tent at this late hour, and so soon after his warriors have fought our men?"

As has been intimated elsewhere, the sachem's knowledge of English was sufficient for him to understand the question; but, true to his character, he would not admit the fact, and held his peace until the words were translated to him by his companion, whose knowledge of English surprised the American officer.

"My brother comes from the Father of the Thirteen Fires," said Red Jacket, alluding to Washington, as the commander of the armies of the warring States; "he is a great and good man. Why has he sent his armies into the country of his red children, to destroy their crops and burn their homes?"

Sullivan's quick temper instantly showed itself.

"Because," he said, raising his voice, "the Iroquois have joined the enemies of our country; they do not fight like civilized persons; they kill old men and women and children; they torture their prisoners, as they did at Wyoming, at Cherry Valley, at Schoharie, and other places. The Father of the Thirteen Fires is angry; his patience has left him. He has sent me to punish the Iroquois."

"Red Jacket was not at Wyoming, or Cherry

Valley, or Schoharie, or any of the places his brother has named."

"The most that I have been able to learn is that he was n't at Wyoming. I am not so certain about Cherry Valley and Schoharie. But my army has n't marched all the way into the Indian country to punish Red Jacket alone. If he were the only one concerned, the Father of the Thirteen Fires would send one of his children to punish Red Jacket."

Although these slurring words were translated to the Seneca, he did not evince the slightest resentment. He listened calmly, and was silent for a moment before continuing:

"Red Jacket is the friend of the white man."

"Then he has an infernally poor way of showing it! Was he not in the battle to-day?"

"He was fighting for his women and children and his home."

"He does n't do us much harm so long as he keeps to that; but the Great Spirit has given him the gift of oratory, and his speeches to his warriors make them fight harder than they would if he held his tongue mute."

Red Jacket had a streak of vanity in his composition, and the compliment implied in this charge pleased him. He nodded his head and grunted, and again paused before saying:

"When the Great Spirit commands him to speak,

he must obey. The Great Spirit tells him to urge his children to fight for their people and hunting grounds."

"What does it tell him about tomahawking women and children, and the torturing of prisoners?" was the sarcastic question of General Sullivan.

"Red Jacket has never told his warriors to slay women and children, or to make their prisoners suffer; he has begged them not to do those things."

The American commander indulged in a sneering smile, for he was not deceived by this assertion.

"If the sachem of the Senecas wishes me to listen to his words, he must not speak with a double tongue; he must not try to deceive me. I tell no lies, and I will not listen to them from Red Jacket."

This remark may be described as personal in its application, but none knew better how to pocket an insult than the greatest orator produced by the Six Nations. With the same dignified composure as before, he asked:

"How shall Red Jacket show his brother that he is a friend to the white men?"

"By using his eloquence in favor of peace instead of war."

"Red Jacket will do as his brother wishes if his brother will turn back his armies, and leave his people at peace."

This remark enlightened the American commander

as to the purpose of his visitor. Seeing the impossibility of checking the advance of the invaders, Red Jacket resorted to trickery, and sought, by making fair promises, to roll back the tide of ruin that was sweeping over his country.

Instantly Sullivan yielded to the curiosity to know whether the sachem came in his individual capacity, or whether he was sent into camp by Butler, Brant, Johnson, and Cornplanter. It was idle to ask the sachem the question, for his answer could not be relied on. He therefore addressed the interpreter directly.

"Does Red Jacket come from the other chiefs and leaders, or does he come for himself alone? I ask *you*. Answer me!"

The man was caught off his guard, and replied:

"He comes for none of them. He speaks only for Red Jacket."

The sachem turned angrily upon the interpreter, and demanded what had been said to him by their brother, though Red Jacket must have caught its meaning. The Indian spoke truthfully, for he dared not do otherwise. Fortunately, the answer was the one that the sachem wished the officer to believe, for he hoped it would strengthen his confidence in his visitor. Red Jacket felt no concern for his fellow leaders. If he could save his own skin and his family, he would be satisfied.

But his project disgusted General Sullivan. He would not have hesitated to use him, if practicable, against his people; but no reliance could be placed on any of his promises.

He directed the interpreter to say all this to Red Jacket, and to tell him he must leave at once, for they were enemies, and nothing he could say or do would stay the hand that was raised to smite.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JED STIFFENS'S "IDEE."

IT has been said that one of the Iroquois villages stood near the scene of the fight at Hog's Back. It numbered about fifty cabins, all made of logs, the whole inferior to the Indian settlements to the northward, though some of the dwellings were the equal of those found among the white settlers. Each house was surrounded by a patch of cultivated ground, where were grown vegetables, flowers, and in some instances fruit trees. In addition, there were more than a hundred acres of fine growing corn, for the soil was fertile, and most of the members of the Six Nations were good farmers.

The inhabitants of this town fled upon the approach of the invading army, though many lingered within sound of the guns, and, as the fateful afternoon drew to a close, watched the battle from afar, praying for the defeat of the white men. Among one of the groups was Fa-te-na-non, the famous medicine man, who indulged in his grotesque incantations and heathen ceremonies, shouting all the time that the Indians were sure to win the battle,

and that not one of the white dogs should be left to carry the dismal tidings back to the Council of the Thirteen Fires.

At the end of two hours, when the Tories and Iroquois were fleeing in every direction before the resistless charges of the Americans, Fa-te-na-non was compelled to revise his prophecy and consent to a postponement of its fulfilment.

When the summer daybreak lit up the sad scene, General Sullivan's troops gave their attention to the property of their enemies. The wooden structures offered the most combustible kind of fuel, and the torch was applied in a score of places at the same moment. Almost immediately the village was one roaring conflagration, which continued until every house was in ashes. The owners had taken away but a small quantity of their simple furniture, there being a general hope that their homes would be spared, or that the invaders would be defeated. As a consequence, the destruction could not have been more complete.

The fruit trees and cornfields were not forgotten. The former, many of them laden with apples, pears, peaches, and plums, were ruthlessly chopped down; the animals that remained were shot, while soldiers on foot and horseback tramped back and forth among the stalks, uprooting, trampling, and cutting them to the earth, until the field was level and every ear

ruined. As Jed Stiffens remarked, there was not enough left to sustain a Seneca warrior for three days during the coming winter.

"It looks rough," was the comment of General Sullivan to General Poor; "but it is n't a circumstance to what is coming."

The belief prevailed among the general officers that no more serious fighting awaited them, because of the crushing defeat that had been administered to the largest force their enemies could bring together. There had been some apprehension that the British would send a body of troops from Fort Niagara, with artillery, in which event the result of the battle might have been more doubtful, since the enemy would have had the choice of position, and been able to put up a stubborn defence; but although, as has been shown, there were a few British soldiers among the Tories, their number was insignificant, and they could hardly be considered a factor in the decision of the battle. It was now too late for them to offer effective resistance; while the garrison at Fort Niagara was in danger of being attacked upon the conclusion of Sullivan's campaign against the Indians.

As for the attempt at ambuscade, there were various opinions about the probability of that, and the puzzle of it was that Jed Stiffens, the highest authority on the question, was undecided in his

own mind. The place selected by Red Jacket and Colonel Rossiter was favorable in every respect, and but for the crushing defeat of the Iroquois he would have looked upon the attempted ambuscade as inevitable.

Now, for a small force of Iroquois to entrap an army of nearly five thousand men may be set down as one of the impossibilities, unless there is as much criminal negligence shown as was the case with Braddock, and it has been demonstrated that General Sullivan neglected no precaution against surprise.

On the other hand, the severe chastisement received by Cornplanter, the Butlers, and their hordes, had roused them to the highest pitch of fury, and they had already proven with what desperation they could fight under competent leaders. It would seem reasonable, therefore, that, like the wounded rattlesnake, they would strike before expiring. They would hover on the wings of the army, picking off such soldiers as they could without too much risk to themselves, and it might be they would try to ambuscade, to a partial extent, the army itself, counting upon inflicting severe losses before being routed, as was certain to be the final issue.

"I don't see that anything is to be gained by speculating over the matter," remarked General

Sullivan at the noon halt, when, in the company of his leading officers, he was discussing the matter with his favorite scout. "All that we have to do is to be ready for any move on their part. As before, Jed, we depend greatly upon you."

"Not forgittin' Jack Ripley," grinned the veteran. "I must take him with me on this trip."

The youth was absent with his company, where he had been regularly enrolled.

"He has been extremely fortunate thus far, and I learn that he fought like a veteran yesterday in the charge against the intrenchments."

"Of course."

"And why 'of course'?" asked the amused commander.

"'Cause he could n't do anything else."

"And why could n't he do anything else?"

"'Cause he 's the son of Colonel 'Raish Ripley."

"I admit that there 's no disputing *that* argument. Since there is n't likely to be much need of his services in the ranks for some time to come, he may be considered to be in your charge, Jed; though I must say that, since we are now fairly within the Iroquois country, his position will be more dangerous to him than if he remains in the ranks with the rest of the men."

"What difference does that make to *him?*" asked the scout, with fine scorn.

"None, unless it may be an additional attraction. How soon may we expect to reach the place where it was intended by the Iroquois to try their ambuscade?"

"To-morrer afternoon, not much after this time. Gin'ral, I 've had an idee ever since last night."

"I supposed you were possessed of several ideas, Jed."

"But this one is worth all the others. Would you like to know what it is?"

"I am always interested in anything that interests you."

The manner of the scout was so peculiar that the commander and all the officers who saw it smiled. First, he stepped forward until he stood close in front of the seated General. Then he glanced right and left, as if afraid of being overheard, though he meant all the group to hear him. He closed an eye, cocked his head slightly to one side, grinned broadly, and then asked in a husky undertone:

"Did Colonel Rossiter git away last night?"

"Certainly not, so far as I have heard," replied the startled commander, looking inquiringly round in the faces of his officers; "am I mistaken, gentlemen?"

He was assured that the British officer was still in custody.

"I should have been surprised to hear otherwise, for my orders regarding him were very strict."

Jed Stiffens's voice sank lower, and he thrust his face slightly further forward, with a more expansive grin than before.

"*Can't you afford to let the chap git away?*"

"I do not understand what you mean by that question."

"It 's my 'pinion that it would be the best thing to do."

"Why, Jed," said Sullivan, gravely; "that is a strange remark, when we know that if he should be paroled now, the first thing he would do on rejoining his friends would be to tell them we knew all about their intended ambuscade."

"Wal, s'pose he did. What of it?"

"Why—why, they would n't make the attempt to ambuscade us at that point."

"Are you anxious, Gin'ral, they should?"

"I am not anxious they should try it at all; but when they do, I want it to be where we shall know about it, instead of at a strange place."

"S'pose there ain't any strange place?"

The commander looked at the scout more puzzled than ever, though a light began to dawn upon him.

"There is no end to them."

"In course, in course; but there ain't any that will suit the varmints like the one we 've been talkin'

'bout, and when they find we 've larned all we need to know, they 'll be up aginst trouble."

The " idee " of Jed Stiffens was now plain to all. As he viewed the situation, it was best that Cornplanter, Red Jacket, Brant, and the Butlers should learn that Sullivan knew about the ambuscade, which was such a pet project with them; and the only way they could ascertain the fact was through Colonel Rossiter.

Several of the officers were impressed by the cleverness of the scheme and expressed themselves in favor of it, but General Sullivan, as the head of the army, was more deliberate.

" It would be easy enough for me to arrange that," he remarked to Jed, " without having him run the risk he would have to take in escaping from our lines. I should have to parole him—that 's all. While he would be bound to take no part in the fighting until exchanged, he would be at liberty to talk as much as he chose, and it would be strange if he did not do so."

" S'pose he made a run for it ? "

" He has the right to make the attempt, and, if he succeeded, he would be an escaped prisoner, at liberty to act as if he had never been captured."

" Don't you see, Gin'ral," said Jed, screwing his wrinkled countenance into a more ludicrous contortion than before, " that the Colonel knows you 've

held him pris'ner 'cause you did n't want him to tell the varmints 'bout the ambush? Now, if after you 've told him you did n't mean to let him go, you all at once turn him loose, what will he think?"

"I don't suppose he will think anything in particular?"

"Yes, he will, Gin'ral, by a big majority; he 'll know you let him go 'cause you wanted him to carry the news to his friends. He can't help thinkin' that."

There was a general smile among the officers, and the quick-tempered commander's face flushed. He did not relish being tripped in this fashion; but his resentment quickly vanished. He was too fond of Jed Stiffens, and too great an admirer of his woodcraft, to begrudge him the credit that belonged to him.

"And you also see, Gin'ral," added the scout, driving the nail home, "that if he is give a chance to make a sneak of it, he won't 'spect nothin'. Do you catch my idee, Gin'ral?"

"I do, Jed, and think so well of it that it shall be adopted."

"I 'm obleeged," remarked the scout, who, with the privilege that no other person present dared to take, added, "Gin'ral, you 're 'most cute 'nough to larn the purfession of a scout."

Saluting the officer, Jed withdrew, and, accom-

panied by Jack Ripley, set out to resume his scouting on the outskirts of the army. The afternoon was only fairly begun, and, though he did not expect to pick up any specially important information, his experience taught him that more than once it was on just such occasions he had gained more knowledge than he was seeking.

That night the invading army reached and partly encamped in a swamp six or eight miles in extent. A marked change was made in the line of march, for instead of following the river, which was becoming too shallow to be of much use, the troops turned off and struck directly into the wilderness. The purpose in doing this was to flank some of the positions where there was likely to be trouble, while at the same time the route to Catharine's Town would be shortened.

This was the residence of Queen Esther, who has been referred to in a preceding chapter. None knew the merciless woman better than General Sullivan. While gathering his troops at Wyoming, he had talked with Lebbeus Hammond and Joseph Elliott, and learned the particulars of their remarkable escape from the furious Hecate, and of her other frightful deeds.

"Thither we go," said Sullivan, with a compression of his lips. "Our expedition would be incomplete if she were not made to feel our anger."

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT JED AND JACK DISCOVERED.

SEVERAL causes operated to lead General Sullivan to make the change of route into the heart of the Indian country.

One has been indicated: his wish to pay a desolating visit to Catharine's Town at the earliest possible hour. Knowing well the frightful outrages committed by her during the Wyoming massacre of the preceding summer, he vowed that his expedition should never return until it made a call upon her. He could have pushed straight ahead, and taken in her branch of the tribe on his return, by deviating somewhat from the route first laid out; but he was unwilling to wait. The line he was following was the most direct course to the home of Queen Esther.

The more he reflected upon the plan of releasing Colonel Rossiter, or, what amounted to the same thing, allowing him to escape, the more doubtful the commander became of the consequences of the step. He was an intelligent officer, and, after having been kept in such close custody, the opportunity of

escape, when it came to him, might rouse suspicion on his part of the truth; but, even if it did not, he would naturally believe that the Americans, knowing where the ambuscade was to be laid, and aware, too, that he knew they knew it, would expect him to warn his friends.

However, as the commander viewed it, no harm could come in permitting him to slip away that night, even if no good followed. Accordingly, as it was easy to arrange the matter with his guard, the chance was given the prisoner; but Colonel Rossiter spoiled everything by not taking advantage of it. He persistently closed his eyes to the open door, and slept peacefully through the night, ascertaining which, General Sullivan paroled him, and the two parted with mutual expressions of good-will.

Inasmuch as the change in the line of march had been made before this, the ideas of Colonel Rossiter, to say the least, were likely to be confused, and no further attention was given to him by those among whom he had lately been a prisoner.

The valley of the Susquehanna offered a natural pathway for the invading army, but the upper waters of that beautiful river are so shallow, the width so narrow, and the current so swift, that the heavily laden boats were comparatively useless. The artillery and supplies, therefore, were taken

from them, and, as has been stated, a course followed which led directly into the wilderness.

But so large and cumbersome a body as nearly five thousand men and their impedimenta could not escape the eagle eyes of the Iroquois scouts that were watching them from a hundred vantage points, and the danger of an attempted ambuscade still confronted the invading army. Because of this, the scouts were kept busy, and the flanking parties and the strong guards at the front and rear were maintained.

Naturally, therefore, it came about that on the forenoon of the day after the change in the line of march, Jed Stiffens and Jack Ripley, scouting far in advance and in company, reached a point where the veteran decided it necessary to make an observation of the country spread out before them, and through which it was intended the army should push into the heart of the Indian country.

He selected a slightly elevated piece of ground, picked out his tree with great care, it being a towering oak, to which species he was partial, and the two climbed it in company. The assurance of the veteran that none of their enemies was in the immediate vicinity, and his assistance to Jack in managing his gun, one of the most awkward of impediments under the circumstances, made the climbing of the forest monarch an easy task.

Carefully they picked their way among the limbs to the top. When half-way there, they were invisible to the keenest eyes from below, so that, being assured that they had not been discovered, they were equally certain of remaining unseen so long as they stayed in the tree.

Jed took upon himself to make the first survey. Without using his glass, he parted the leaves in front of his face and spent several minutes in peering out over the several miles of landscape. While thus engaged he did not speak, nor was Jack Ripley, while closely studying the seamed countenance, able to tell what was passing in his mind, or whether he had made any discovery worth all the time and trouble.

"Now, you take a look, younker," he quietly remarked. "You can do it as well from the limb you are a-settin' on as from mine."

Jack was only a foot or two below his companion, and slightly farther out on the branch. Imitating the action of Jed, he parted the interposing leaves with one hand, and, steadying himself with the other, "surveyed the landscape o'er."

He saw in front of him a stretch of wilderness, mostly undulating, but with no special elevation within a couple of miles. At that distance, however, two ridges, running parallel and extending north and south, approached to within a furlong; but a short distance beyond they diverged again,

the ridges sloping away until they were merged into the comparatively level forest which enveloped the visible country to the horizon in the far north.

A slight rustling caused him to withdraw his gaze for a moment and to look up at his friend. He saw that the latter had taken his glass from his pocket and was intently studying the scene.

"If the varmints was goin' to try one of their ambuscades," quietly remarked the scout, "where do you think it would be?"

"In that narrow valley, about two miles ahead, where the ridges come quite close to each other."

"Umph! you do, eh? What makes you think so?"

"Because the topography of the country is so favorable."

"Topoggerphy!" muttered Jed, with a grunt, "what does *that* mean?"

"I suppose you would call it the 'lay of the land,' replied Jack with a quiet smile. "Do you understand that?"

"In course I do, for it 's English. When you 're talkin' to me, use English, or some of the Injin lingoes which I can git the hang of."

"What I meant was that, supposing General Sullivan intends to take the route in front of us—— "

"Which the same he does."

"He would have to pass between those two

JED AND JACK MAKING OBSERVATIONS. *Page 246.*

ridges, where the Indians could hide themselves among the trees and behind the rocks—— "

"How do you know there are any rocks over there?"

"I don't; I am only guessing."

"Wal, you guessed right; there 's plenty of 'em. Go ahead."

"I meant only to say that nature seems to have fitted the place for just such a trap as the army would march into."

"Humph! You think that, do you?"

"Yes; don't you?"

Instead of replying, Jed handed the spyglass down to the youth.

"You 've got purty good eyes, but not so good that this thing won't help you. Now use it the best you know how, and tell me what you see."

Jack Ripley was certain that his friend would not have acted thus had he not himself made some important discovery, and he was determined to even up matters by finding out for himself what that discovery was.

He therefore studied every point in the landscape, but especially the narrow valley that has already been described. Shifting the glass as was necessary, his keen eyes roved from spot to spot, from tree to tree and to the crest of each inclosing ridge. He was sure that nothing escaped his scrutiny, and

then he went all over his work again, repeating it twice, but with no more result than in the first instance, and he was compelled so to report.

"I can see nothing of any person, nor signs of their presence. I suppose they will not gather until they know our army——"

"Never mind 'bout s'posin' nothin'. What do you *know?*"

"Nothing."

Something resembling a chuckle sounded over his head.

"You have larned nothin', eh?"

"Not a thing more than I have told you."

"And you don't think any of the varmints are there?"

"I won't say that—only that I see nothing of any."

Again the chuckling was heard. Jed turned his wrinkled and grinning countenance so as to look down on the lad directly beneath him, and, in the guarded tone which he always used when on a scout, he said:

"All the same, younker, there are a hundred Iroquois in that valley, and more of 'em are comin' every minute!"

It was astounding news to Jack Ripley, but he could not doubt the declaration. He asked in a wondering, half-whisper:

"Why, Jed, how did you find it out?"

"By usin' my eyes, which the same some folks don't know how to use."

The soft chuckling was heard again, and the scout said:

"You 've got purty good eyes, as I remarked afore, younker; but there 's some things they can't see as well as Jed Stiffens, which the same is old 'nough to be your father."

The veteran seemed to forget the momentous meaning of his discovery in the triumph over the youth, who promptly replied:

"There are a good many things, Jed, in which your eyes are better than mine. You must remember that you have had a much longer training than I."

"Howsumever, you 're doin' purty well for a beginner. You 've got the glass yet. Jest p'int it toward that spot on the right of the ridge, where the tops of three trees show close together. One of 'em is an oak, one an ash, and the other a maple. The oak is in the middle, and is 'bout four feet higher than the ash, which is a foot and a half taller than the maple."

Wondering how the woodman could identify the trees at that distance, even with the aid of the glass, Jack levelled the instrument at the group described so accurately that he recognized them at once.

For a minute or two he suspected his friend was trifling with him, but, by and by, he fancied he detected a slight movement among the upper limbs, such as would have been made by a gentle breeze, but he could not distinguish anything more, and said so.

"Which the same bein' the case," commented Jed, "there ain't no use in askin' you to shoot off your eyes at var'ous other spots in the country ahead."

"I saw a slight movement among the limbs of one of the three trees, though I can't tell which one it was. "What was the cause of it?"

"In them three tree tops there is ten or twelve Injins watchin' for the comin' of Gin'ral Sullivan. They ain't burnin' any signal fires, like they generally do, for there ain't no use for 'em. But they 're gatherin' fast by means of calls that they 're a little too far off for us to hear."

"Then they intend to try to ambuscade us there?"

"As sure as the sun is shinin' in the sky above us."

"Then, if I may be permitted to suggest, the best thing we can do is to hurry to General Sullivan, and let him know all this."

"That 's what my promptin's lead me to do. But there ain't no cause for hurry 'bout the same. Climb down, pardner, and I 'll foller."

Jack Ripley obeyed with the same care he had used in ascending the tree, and when the two dropped lightly to the ground, the veteran assured him they were in no immediate danger. While it was possible that some of the Iroquois scouts were prowling through the woods at no great distance, yet their attention was concentrated upon the spot where they had intended to try to ambuscade the American army, which was approaching, and already within a comparatively short distance.

An hour later, Jed Stiffens and Jack Ripley reached the main body and reported the important discovery they had made. Instantly the flanking forces and guards were signalled to halt, and a council of war was called, at which Jed was present and explained in detail the grave situation. While he was thus engaged, other scouts came in with additional particulars, all confirming what the veteran had told.

Cornplanter, Brant, Red Jacket, and both the Butlers were using every energy to concentrate all the available Tories and Iroquois on the sides of the narrow valley through which the course of the march must lead the American army, unless they discovered their peril in time to flank the position. It was to be the last desperate stand of the enemy, who realized that they had more at stake than ever before in their history. They would fight like tigers, and,

protected by the rocks and dense wood and undergrowth, would be able to inflict great loss of life and damage upon the invaders.

One obvious course was open for General Sullivan: that was to flank the position of the enemy. He proceeded to do this with such skill that the baffled horde fled in dismay. They had made their last despairing effort, and offered no further opposition to the resistless advance of the wrathful avengers who were now fairly upon them.

CHAPTER XXV.

"FAIR AS THE GARDEN OF THE LORD."

ENOUGH has been stated to make it clear that General Sullivan was sternly resolved to carry out the instructions of Washington, to make his blow against the Six Nations as severe as it was possible for human energy to make it. "At Wyoming, the mercy was the tomahawk; here it shall be the firebrand," was the motto of the invaders, many of whose families had suffered from the ferocity of the Iroquois and Tories.

The incidents which follow may strike the reader as cruel, and they *were* cruel to the last degree. But what is war but the summary of all cruelty? Washington was a merciful man, but, as was shown at the opening of our story, he could not close his eyes to the woful fact that the only way to save the exposed settlements from outrage and massacre was by carrying the war into the very core of the hostile country, and smiting the savages so remorselessly that they would never dare to repeat the crimes hitherto committed with impunity.

Wyoming had been compelled to drink deep of

the bitter cup because most of her able-bodied men were hundreds of miles distant, fighting the battles of their country. They had the right to demand, and they did demand, that their families should be protected, and, if this were not done, they declared they would leave the army and go to their homes to save their loved ones from death at the hands of those who knew not the meaning of the word mercy.

Marching northward, the army of Sullivan reached the Indian village of Conewawah, a name which in the Iroquois means a-head-on-a-pole. It stood on the site of the town afterward known as Newtown, where is now the city of Elmira, one of the most flourishing in the State of New York.

People who to-day pass through the Indian Territory, where are the homes of the Five Civilized Tribes, are amazed at the evidences of civilization on every hand. The Indians have schools, academies, colleges, churches, newspapers, and a system of government modelled after our own, with the house of representatives, the senate, and the governor and public officers elected the same as our own are elected. In many of the houses are carpets, sewing-machines, and pianos, with signs of thrift and enterprise continually in evidence. In short, the Indians referred to are thoroughly civilized.

Strange as it may sound, the Osage tribe are the wealthiest people in the world, for every baby born

among them is entitled to $15,000, the proceeds of the sales of their lands to the United States, which give to each person, male and female, that handsome sum, while many of the men have greatly increased their portions by judicious investment and management.

These things may not sound so strange at the present day, but who would have thought of anything of the kind during the Revolution? While it cannot be claimed that the Iroquois had attained the high civilization shown in the Indian Nation at the present time, yet they had reached a degree of advancement and prosperity not generally known or suspected.

The Senecas and Cayugas had regularly laid-out villages, with frame houses, tastefully painted, and provided with broad stone chimneys, built mainly on the outside, in accordance with the fashion of the times. In the surrounding grounds grew fragrant flowers, and their fields were extensive and fruitful, with thousands of apple, pear, and peach trees. They had horses, cows, and fowls, and from the abundant crops they garnered enough to support them in comfort through the long, cold winters, no matter how scarce game might be, or how indisposed they felt to hunt for it.

Had the Six Nations been as wise during the Revolution as they were on many other occasions,

and, choosing not to fight on the side of the Americans, but to remain neutral, as they could easily have done, they would have been left undisturbed, and might have enjoyed all their plenty and comfort in peace. But they decided to aid Great Britain, and to prosecute the war in the horrible manner described, with the result that retribution was visited upon them when they were looking for nothing of the kind and considered their situation secure against any force of Americans that could be brought against it. Their awakening was sudden and startling.

It was into this region, "fair as the garden of the Lord," that the American army swept. The Iroquois had removed their women and children beyond reach; a step that was unnecessary, since the invaders were not making war upon helpless ones, though some of the very women who fled had been among the most savage assailants of the helpless Americans. Sullivan's orders were strict, and his officers gave the soldiers to understand that any violation of the instructions would be followed by swift punishment.

As the advance-guard drew near Conewawah, glimpses were caught of many warriors dodging behind and between the houses, and skulking among the trees, but with no intention of holding their ground against the invaders. A remarkable

incident was, that the first shot fired by one of these prowlers killed an officer riding on horseback, he being struck down so instantly that he did not speak a word. The shot was fired from so great a distance that its effect was wholly accidental.

The advance broke into shouts, and then dashed into the village on the double-quick. The Iroquois darted here and there, and fired fully fifty more shots before they took to their heels, but none inflicted injury, nor, so far as could be noted, was any of the Indians killed. One of them, however, was wounded, for he was seen to be supported by two others who hurried him beyond range, which was the last sight of the defenders of Conewawah.

The way being open, the troops lost no time. The frame houses offered the best kind of fuel for the torch, and not one was spared. The heavy smoke rolled upward into the summer sky, and at one time the heat became so blistering that a number engaged in slashing the fruit trees had to desist until the flames partly subsided.

Had the Butlers possessed a company of trained cavalry, they could have visited sharp punishment upon the Americans, who, feeling no misgiving, scattered everywhere and eagerly engaged in the work of destruction. They jested about the blazing buildings, played jokes upon one another as they levelled fruit trees and the growing corn, and chased

their comrades back and forth like so many schoolboys. A dash of cavalry among them would have laid many low, but, had there been any danger of that nature, General Sullivan would not have permitted the risk. As it was, a goodly portion of the army was kept under arms and on the *qui vive* for any demonstration from the Tories and Iroquois, numbers of whom hovered in the distance, firing as opportunity presented, but generally at such long range that no harm was done.

The work of destruction was pressed vigorously so long as anything remained unfinished. Finally, the order of march was taken up again.

Although Jed Stiffens had assisted in the destruction of the Indian village, Jack Ripley played the part of a looker-on. When rallied for his squeamishness, he said, with a shake of his head:

"No doubt this is all right, Jed, but it does n't look to me like war."

"I admit, it 's a little different from chargin' intrenchments and batterin' down the skulps of the varmints with the butt of your gun; but, so long as they won't stand their ground, what are you goin' to do 'bout it?"

"I 'm not criticising this business. It is enough to know that it is carrying out the orders of General Washington. He would n't have commanded it if it had n't been necessary."

" Then, younker, why don't you turn in and help ? "

" I don't seem to be needed, Jed. The men are getting on very well."

" There 's no denyin' that—thunder! "

Some one from behind the corner of one of the burning buildings launched an ear of green corn at that moment with such surprising accuracy that it landed squarely against the half-opened mouth of the scout, imparting at the same time a crispness to the exclamation that escaped him. He turned to identify the aggressor, and, catching a glimpse of his grinning countenance, was off like a shot, while Jack Ripley broke into irrestrainable laughter. Some fifteen minutes later, when he descried Jed returning, he asked:

" Did you catch him ? "

" No; but I lambasted another chap, and that made it even."

" And what did *he* do ? "

" Lambasted somebody else."

" I should think—— "

Jack checked himself, for at that moment the first offender disclosed himself in the same position as before, grinning harder than ever, grasping another ear of corn, and evidently making ready to launch it at Jed, whose back was toward him. Catching the eye of the youth, he signalled to him not to reveal the

situation. Jack was quite willing to help in the by-play, and, checking himself for a moment, he resumed:

"I should think such a way of settling accounts would not be very satisfactory to all concerned."

The quick-witted scout was accustomed to reading a person's thoughts from his expression, and manner. He noticed the hesitancy of the lad and caught the peculiar flitting of his eyes. He knew that he had detected something unusual behind the scout. The latter turned like a flash, and saw his man in the act of throwing the missile.

With an Indian war-whoop, Jed bounded toward him. The sudden charge interfered with the aim of the aggressor, and the ear of corn flew wild. Whirling about, the fellow was off like a shot, with Jed hot-foot after him. The soldier was unusually fleet of foot, but none in the army was the equal of Jed Stiffens. Had the race been a fair one, he would have overhauled the fugitive in a few minutes, but with the burning buildings, the slashing of shade and fruit trees, the shouting and running to and fro, and general confusion everywhere, caused by the hundreds of men engaged in the work of destruction, the offender doubled, turned, and at the moment his pursuer was at his heels, dodged among a party coming around the corner of another blazing structure, and vanished as utterly as if the ground had opened and swallowed him.

The baffled Jed stopped short and stared around him.

"Where the mischief did that fellow go?"

"What fellow?" innocently asked the biggest man of the party, rightly surmising the condition of affairs.

"Why, Tom Seton! You seen him! He went by here a minute ago! Where is he?"

"Don't know nothin' 'bout him; hain't seen nothin' of him; reckon you 're gettin' a little top-heavy in your upper works, Jed! Better go down to the lake and cool off for the rest of the day."

"*You 'll* sarve as well as Tom!"

As he uttered the words, Jed Stiffens leaped upon the unsuspecting fellow, bore him to the ground and began pounding him with might and main. His victim was powerful, and quickly rallied. The two rolled over and over, pummeling each other as if it were a life and death struggle, whereas both were laughing so heartily that little strength was left to them.

The group gathered about the two, and cheered them on, vociferously declaring that each was bound to get a crushing advantage over his opponent provided he kept at it and did not weaken. Thus cheered, they did keep at it, until both were exhausted, when they ceased and climbed weakly to their feet. Each spectator had constituted himself a referee, and the general agreement was that the

struggle was a draw, to be decided on the first favorable opportunity.

Jack Ripley held his first position, laughing at the absurd exhibition, the latter part of which was enacted beyond his sight, when the original offender, who was the cause of it all, appeared for the third time in his first position, with an ear of corn in his good right hand, grinning more expansively than ever.

"That 's the way you help a chap to a little innocent fun, is it?" he called. "Very well; here goes for *you!*"

But, having warning of what was coming, Jack deftly dodged the missile. The one previously thrown at Jed Stiffens still lay on the ground within easy reach. Jack snatched it up as the man turned to run, and let fly with such accuracy that it landed on the back of the other's head with a force that caused his hat to fly off as he sprawled forward on his hands and knees. Before he could rise to his feet, Jack concluded it best to do some running himself, and accordingly he took to his heels.

Amid such rollicking fun as this, General Sullivan sat on his horse a short distance away, and calmly contemplated the work of ruin and devastation. When it was completed, and nothing more remained to be done, he said, with a compression of his lips and a flash of his black eyes, "Now for Catharine's Town!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NIGHT EXPEDITION.

THE Indian village known as Queen Catharine's Town stood near the head of Seneca Lake, on the site of the present town of Havana. It numbered some fifty dwellings, nearly all of which were of excellent make, and superior to those of whose destruction we have just given an account. They were constructed of timber, there being only one or two log cabins near the further end of the town; they were painted, had regular chimneys, were mostly two stories in height, and divided into convenient rooms both above and below. All faced the single street or broad highway, and had small patches of grass or yards in front, but were unprotected by fences, since such protection was unnecessary.

Flowers diffused their fragrance from many points; vines climbed the gables and fronts of the houses; peach, pear, and apple trees grew near, and, earlier in the season, made the avenue look like a lane through fairyland. Back of and surrounding these were hundreds of acres of corn and fruit, the whole

forming one of the most attractive pictures of prosperity, contentment, and happiness that can be imagined.

One feature of the scene was pathetic. At the sides or in front of many of the houses were to be seen the playthings of the Indian children. Some of them were toy carts, each with box body, two wheels sawed from boards, and the long, curving tongue, the furthest point tipped forward and resting on the ground. There were wagons with four similiar wheels, excepting that the front ones were less in diameter than the rear, as is the fashion of the present time. There were piles of wood partly chopped into fuel of uniform length, a number of rag dolls, with "saw horses," saws, axes, and the various utensils needed by households. All these and others lay scattered or reposing here and there, just as if the owners had whisked into the different houses to escape a squall that had suddenly burst in the heavens.

But not a living inhabitant was in sight. Long before the avenging host could reach the town, its inhabitants fled to escape the wrath that they knew would be wreaked upon them if they remained.

Almost precisely in the centre of the town stood a larger building than any of the others. It had been freshly painted of a bright white color, and the shutters were a vivid green. A broad piazza

extended along the front; the grass was green and fresh, decked here and there with flowers, climbing honeysuckles were at the sides, while an arbor of ripening grapes extended fifty feet along the sides of the spacious dwelling. Everything betokened the prosperity and wealth of the owner, and the house and grounds were fully double in extent those of any of the neighbors.

This was the "palace," or residence of Catharine Montour, otherwise known in history as Queen Esther of the Senecas. How hard to imagine that the occupant, so well remembered at that time by old people of fashion in Philadelphia, could be otherwise than gentle, kind, and considerate! And yet she was one of

"The veriest devils that e'er clinched fingers in a captive's hair."

It was from this serene, tranquil home, that she had gone forth with the most ferocious of the painted Iroquois, to revel in outrage, massacre, and crime in the valley of Wyoming. The picture drawn of her dashing out the brains of the captives held helplessly in place about "Bloody Rock" is no picture of the imagination, but it all occurred just as described on that fateful summer day in 1778.

The advance of General Sullivan's army arrived at the head of Seneca Lake on the afternoon of a day early in September. They had marched a long

distance, the weather was sultry and oppressive, and orders were issued for the troops to rest on their arms until the morrow, when, with renewed vigor, they would resume their work of destruction. It was understood that not a stick of Catharine's Town, not a flower, stalk of corn, fruit tree, or twig, animal or fowl, should be spared.

"She shall have a taste of the medicine she gave Wyoming!" said the American commander, with a forceful exclamation. "When I recall the horrors she committed there, my blood boils, and I am tempted to make her the one exception to the rules that have been issued to the men."

"To what do you refer?" asked General Clinton.

"To the rule forbidding them to harm any of the women."

"And she is nearly eighty years old! Think of it!"

"A veritable Hecate! She would dance with delight at the chance of repeating her deeds of last summer. But she has taken good care to place herself beyond reach, so we need n't give any thought to her, or, indeed, to any of the Six Nations. That little try at ambuscading in the wilderness was the last spark, and we shall have no serious trouble. I hope that Colonel Brodhead, marching from Pittsburg, has been as fortunate as we."

It may as well be stated in this place that Colonel

Brodhead, in one respect, was more fortunate than General Sullivan; for, advancing northward from the point named, he inflicted great damage upon the hostiles, and, when his work was completed, returned eastward without having lost a single man.

The nature of the expedition, and the circumstances by which it was encompassed, brought a change also in the nature of Jack Ripley's duties. He had entered the rank of the army as a private, and we have demonstrated how well he did his duty at Hog's Back; but the necessity of continuing that work had vanished for the time, since the enemy no longer offered a united opposition.

It has been shown further that the youth did excellent service as a scout in the company of Jed Stiffens; but the necessity for that had also, in a great measure, passed, since while the Iroquois were active, it was a matter of slight concern to the invaders, for they could do little or nothing to affect the army's movements or action.

The moon did not rise until it was too late to benefit those who could have found use for its illumination, but the sky was clear and studded with millions of twinkling stars. Scanning the heavens from horizon to zenith in all directions, not a cloud as large as a man's hand could be found to obscure the stargleam. The night was one of the most beautiful of the year.

It was comparatively early in the evening, when Jed Stiffens and Jack Ripley withdrew from camp and made their way by a roundabout course to the side of the lake, near its head or extreme southern point. The personality of the veteran was so familiar throughout the army that he had no difficulty in entering and leaving the lines whenever he chose.

He was in a section more familiar to him than the country through which they had been making their way for the last few weeks, for he had hunted along the shores of Seneca Lake and fished in its crystalline depths. In the times when peace reigned among the Six Nations, he had spent many days and nights among the Senecas, Cayugas, Onondagas, and different tribes, forming the acquaintance of Brant, Cornplanter, and others, and gaining a knowledge of Red Jacket that enabled him to take his true measure.

Threading their way along paths that led through the wood, and which had been made by the Senecas in going to and from the lake, the two soon reached the shore, where they paused for a few whispered words.

"I s'pose this is a foolish piece of bus'ness," said Jed, in his guarded voice, while he glanced hither and thither, and listened for the slightest sound. 'But I told you when we started that it was to be

for the good of a chap that you did n't know nothin' 'bout."

"Yes; I remember that," assented Jack.

"Wal, don't you know who he is?"

"I have n't the first idea."

"Bill Patterson, a member of Company G."

"I never heard of him."

"Wal, that don't make no difference. He seems to have been sorter careless like, strolled off too fur in the woods, and was gobbled up by a party of Brant's folks."

"Too bad. But Patterson is n't the first of our men that the Iroquois have killed."

"If it was that, I would n't be here. If they had killed Bill, that would have been the end of him, and he would have been lucky. But they 've got him dead fast, and they 'll burn him at the stake, if they 're not headed off."

Jack started at the thought, and exclaimed:

"And you have set out to save him! How can you do it, Jed?"

"I don't know as I 'm goin' to do it," was the dogged reply.

"But you must have hope, or you would n't make the effort. How do you expect to aid the poor fellow?"

The scout did not reply. Since it was self-evident that he had some scheme in mind, he must

have had also a reason for not revealing it to his companion. Suspecting the fact, Jack did not question him further.

"I s'pose you 're wonderin' why I brought you along," said Jed, with no reference to the question. "The fact is, I don't expect you to give me a bit of help. You 're goin' into danger, sartin sure, and, if you prefer, you may turn back."

"If I had had no wish to share your danger, Jed, I should not have started so willingly with you."

"I beg your pardon, younker," the elder hastened to say, seeing he had hurt the feelings of the youth; "but I brought you 'cause I knowed you was true blue, and 'cause—I like you, next to your father, more 'n anybody in the world."

"It 's all right, Jed. Go ahead, and say no more about it."

Without another word, the veteran turned and began picking his way along the shore of the lake, with the youth almost treading on his heels. That the leader believed they were in peril from the first was apparent from the great care he used, threading his course with as much caution as if entering the lines of the hostiles; as indeed was the fact, since it was known that scores, if not hundreds, of the Iroquois were hovering in the neighborhood, safely out of reach of the armed forces advancing against their towns.

But Jed Stiffens was hunting for something unsuspected by Jack, and he had not penetrated a hundred yards from his starting-point when he came upon it, in the shape of a small Indian canoe drawn well up the bank, where it could not be washed free by the action of the water.

Stopping short, he said, in a low tone:

"I knowed I 'd find something of the kind, for there are plenty of 'em 'long the lake, and it shows the owners ain't fur off."

As noiselessly as a shadow, he shoved the craft clear of the shore, and whispered to Jack to enter it. The youth was accustomed to boating, for his home from infancy had been along the Hudson, and he stepped carefully into the frail structure, and picked up the long ashen paddle that his foot touched. He seated himself near the end, and Jed stepped after him at the moment he gave the craft a shove that sent it several yards from shore. Taking the paddle which the youth held toward him, he dipped it silently into the water, and, running the boat so close to the bank that the overhanging limbs brushed their faces, he began propelling it toward the lower end of the lake.

Neither spoke, for there was no call for it. Jed Stiffens was master of the expedition, and Jack Ripley was only his "silent partner," calmly awaiting the carrying out of his plans and wishes.

The scene was impressive in its loneliness. Overhead gleamed the myriads of stars, reflected in the mirror-like surface of the lake, which was unwrinkled by the slightest ripple. A bank of shadow marked the other shore at this narrow portion, but it speedily dissolved in the gloom caused by the widening of the sheet of water. They were stealing along the right or eastern bank, hugging it so close that at any moment the occupants could have reached out and grasped some of the overhanging limbs which softly tickled their faces as they glided silently past.

It was not the first time that Jack Ripley had shared an Indian canoe with the veteran scout, but years had passed since they entered one of the peculiar craft together, and his admiration of the skill of Jed was unbounded. First upon the right and then upon the left of the boat the point of the paddle was dipped, with no more noise than the swimming of a fish beneath the surface. It seemed, indeed, as if he manipulated the implement with such wonderful skill that not a drop of water dripped from the moist blade, as it was swung from one side to the other. Occasionally, he was forced to turn the canoe slightly outward to avoid a limb protruding more than usual, but he returned the next moment, maintaining his sinuous course with consummate skill.

The stillness was like that of the tomb. No sound came from the encampment of the army, more than a mile distant, where, it may be said, the men were sleeping on their arms, impatient to resume the work of destruction on the morrow, while the vast, arching forest sweeping away to their right was as silent as at " creation's morn."

Seated near the stern of the delicate craft, Jack Ripley had nothing to do but to use his eyes and ears, and to speculate upon what the next step would be in the tragedy of the night. All that he could see was the dazzling stars overhead, their reflection in the gleaming lake, the gloom on the left, right, and in front, into which they were pushing their way like phantoms of the darkness.

The listening ear caught the report of a gun, but it was so faint as to show that it came from some point far distant, and its meaning could be no concern of the two in the canoe. It may have signified nothing, or it may have meant a good deal; but whichever it was, was of no concern to our friends.

Then the peculiar, shrilling cry of a loon was borne across the darkened waters. The bird was well toward the western bank, and, as the most trivial thoughts will intrude upon a person at critical moments, Jack Ripley smiled to himself and asked the mental question:

" Could I shoot the bird if I had a fair chance at

him ? I have tried it many times, but he always dodged the bullet."

A minute later, the most dismal of all cries pierced the ear of night. It was the lonely " *Whoo-oo-o !* " of an owl from the branches of a tree, so close that it must have been disturbed by the action of some one near at hand.

Suddenly, without a word, Jed Stiffens headed the prow of the canoe to the right, and, with one powerful sweep of the paddle, sent it under the overhanging branches. His marvellously trained ear had detected the approach of danger, though no warning reached the consciousness of the listening Jack Ripley.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A RIFLE SHOT.

JACK RIPLEY did not stir or speak, even in the lowest whisper. The canoe had been driven under the overhanging limbs along shore so deftly that it was done almost before he comprehended the change.

The next instant the soft dip of a paddle was heard, and, turning his head so as to look over his shoulder, he caught the faint outlines of a canoe similar to their own, as it glided along the fringe of undergrowth and was thrown into almost invisible relief against the background of stargleam in the opposite horizon. In the craft were seated three warriors, one of whom was swaying the single paddle, as was shown by the slight forward and backward rocking of his shoulders.

The gentle dip of the paddle could be distinguished for some moments after the party had passed out of sight, proof that they had no thought of enemies being so near, else they would not thus have betrayed themselves. It was fortunate in one sense that Jed Stiffens was able to detect them the

instant he did, for, while he probably could have secured the escape of himself and companion, it would have been the end of the business that had brought him thither.

For ten minutes the scout did not stir nor speak. He was listening for another craft, but he heard none. Then leaning forward, so as to bring his face close to that of his companion, he whispered:

"The varmints are lookin' for us."

"How can you know that?" was the astonished question of Jack Ripley.

"I don't mean it 's 'tic'larly for *us*," he replied. "But they don't mean that any of our people shall come the sneak act over 'em. There ain't no doubt now 'bout poor Billy Patterson."

The meaning of the last remark was not understood by Jack, but he asked no questions, quite content to let the scout manage his affairs as he thought best.

"Did you hear anything of that canoe, younker?"

"Not the slightest sound."

The scout chuckled.

"You 'll have to train them ears as well as them eyes of yourn afore you can put yourself alongside of Jed Stiffens."

"There 's no doubt about that; but I 'm doing the best I can."

"Wal, continner to keep on doin' so, and you 'll get there one of these days."

At that moment a sweep of the paddle drove the canoe out from its hiding-place, and Jed resumed the stealthy skirting of the shore, he and his companion on the alert as before, though Jack knew that if the occurrence were repeated, the whole dependence for escape must rest with the scout himself.

As nearly as the youth could determine, their progress continued until they had gone more than a mile from their starting-point. Then Jed ceased swaying the paddle, and, grasping a twig overhead, held the boat motionless while he spent several minutes in listening. He was gratified to hear nothing to cause misgiving.

"Here I 'm goin' to leave you, younker," he whispered. "I don't know how long I 'll be gone, but when you hear the crack of my rifle, you may expect me back in a hurry. If I don't arriv' purty soon, you need n't wait for me."

"Why not?" asked Jack, mystified by the words of his friend. "You don't mean me to understand that you will be—dead?"

A slight chuckle preceded the reply.

"That war n't what I meant; but it will mean that I 'll have to take some other course back to camp, while you can stick to the canoe, and you had n't oughter have any trouble in takin' care of yourself."

"I have no fear as to that. But am I to understand that when the report of a gun reaches to me, I shall be certain it was fired by *you?*"

"That 's my idee, though there may be a slip; but my promptin's tell me that I 'll be the first to shoot my gun. Then, mebbe, there 'll be some shootin' at me, but I don't expect to git hit, though I 'm sure to catch it one of these days. Stay right here, onless, of course, somethin' should turn up that 'll drive you out,— ontil, say, ten or fifteen minutes. If I don't show up by that time, you can make up your mind that I 'm headin' for camp by 'nother route, and the best thing you can do is to paddle for the same p'int; for," added the scout, impressively, "we 've reached an all-fired hot part of the country, jest as sure as you live!"

The scout never stood on ceremony when duty awaited him, and no one disliked a scene more than he. Without an additional word, he stepped softly out of the canoe, and vanished like the flitting of a cloud, leaving his young friend to the unspeakably dismal task of waiting through the dreary interval until he should return, with the added torture of the possibility that he would never return at all.

From what has been stated, it will be understood that one of the American soldiers named Patterson had fallen into the hands of the Indians. Had he simply been killed, no further thought would have

been given him, for such a fate always impends over those of his profession, but it was the fact that when last seen by his friends, he was alive and a prisoner.

As evidence of his frightful peril, it may be added at this point that, while Lieutenant Boyd was making a reconnaissance to Little Beard's town, he was ambushed by Brant, nearly all of his men killed, and himself made prisoner, after which he was tortured to death, with frightful barbarities. It must be expected in the nature of things that occasional mishaps like these should befall General Sullivan's expedition, despite its overwhelming numbers.

The question may occur to the reader as to why, if it was known that the soldier was a captive of the Iroquois, a prompt attempt was not made to rescue him. The answer is that it was utterly impossible for the Americans to do so. The Indians had shown the ease with which they could keep out of the reach of the troops, and the advance of a party of any strength was certain to be discovered by the hostiles long before it reached striking distance, and without the slightest difficulty they could remove their prisoner to some inaccessible point. Moreover, if it were possible to corner the redskins, all they would have to do would be to slay their captive and scatter.

Since it was apparently beyond the power of any armed force to save the hapless prisoner, it would

seem that the chances were infinitely less for the success of a single man, even when that man was so consummate a master of woodcraft as Jed Stiffens.

What, then, meant this extraordinary night expedition in the Indian canoe, with Jack Ripley as his only companion ?

Let the answer be given in the incidents that follow.

Jed Stiffens was now depending upon his intimate knowledge of his surroundings for carrying out the grim errand upon which he had entered. Moving through the wood for a short distance, with the darkness as impenetrable as that of ancient Egypt, he knew from the feeling of his feet that he had struck a well-defined trail. Two hundred yards away it forked, and at the junction of the two paths he expected to face the business that had drawn him thither.

His astounding woodcraft did not mislead him, for he was still threading his course through the gloom when he caught the twinkling light among the trees that warned him he was approaching the camp of the enemy. Since it was possible that one or more of the Iroquois were following the same trail, he stepped aside, and with his inimitable skill approached the camp until it was in plain view, while he himself was enveloped in gloom.

The sight that greeted his eyes caused him to

gnash his teeth. Billy Patterson, the captive of the Iroquois, faced him, with the reflected firelight bringing out every detail of his personality as distinctly as if the sun were in the heavens overhead and he himself stood in an open plain.

His back was against a sapling half a foot in diameter, his hands tied behind him, his cap off, and his ankles bound with hickory withes. Another withe encircled his waist, and still another below the knees held him immovably secured to the sapling. He wore the uniform of an American private soldier, but his musket had been taken from him, and was nowhere in sight. He had long black hair, and the lower part of his face was hidden by a scraggy beard of the same color. Above these, his countenance showed, pale and composed, for the fellow had abandoned all hope, and braced himself for the terrifying ordeal before him. He was looking calmly at the group of tormentors, and grimly waited for them to begin their tortures.

The blazing fire kindled a few paces in front of him lit up a frightful scene. The Iroquois numbered fully a score, all painted hideously, fully armed, and exulting over the prospect of the enjoyment before them.

That Jed Stiffens had not arrived a moment too soon was shown by the pile of fagots at the feet of the prisoner, only awaiting kindling, while nearly

every warrior grasped his hunting-knife, eager to add to the anguish and sufferings of the miserable fellow, as helpless as an infant, in their power.

The most notable figure in this group was an aged woman, of slight frame, dressed in civilized costume; that is, with calico dress, and with shoes and stockings, but without any covering for her head, excepting the long, iron-gray hair that dangled about her bony shoulders. She had rolled up her sleeves to the elbows, disclosing the skinny, muscular forearms, and in one hand she grasped a long, formidable knife, which she swung and circled in front of the prisoner, as if it were hard to restrain her longing to plunge it into his body.

Taking the position named, she began a weird dance, springing as lightly from the ground as a girl could have done, and chanting in a low monotone the death song of her people. She oscillated from side to side, her draggling skirts swinging back and forth with the swaying of her body, while the grating monotone did not vary a note.

This lasted several minutes, throughout which Jed Stiffens held his rifle at a dead level, and pointed toward the wrinkled face of Queen Esther. He was waiting the moment for her to place herself in fair range with the bound prisoner!

Fortunately for Catharine Montour, this did not occur. She kept in front of the man, circling the

knife over her head, chanting her dirge, and fully revealed by the glow of the firelight. Then turning abruptly, as she stopped singing, she uttered an angry command to one of the Senecas, who sprang quickly forward, snatched a brand from the fire, and knelt at the foot of the sapling to apply it to the combustibles heaped there.

At that moment, the sharp crack of Jed Stiffens's rifle rang through the woods. The occasion was one of the very few which justified him in not waiting to reload his weapon, for he whirled about like a flash, and was gone. As for the startled Iroquois and Queen Esther, when they looked at the prisoner, they saw to their rage that he was beyond reach of any torture they could inflict upon his body.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GROPING IN THE DARK.

IT has been stated that it was the purpose of Jed Stiffens to rejoin Jack Ripley where he was waiting in the Indian canoe, under the shadows of the overhanging limbs, just as soon as it was possible for him to do so. In assuring him of this intention, the scout had also intimated that it was not improbable that he would be unable to join him at all.

The latter fear proved well founded, for, while Jed was travelling through the dark woods at a dangerous rate of speed, he became aware that a considerable number of Iroquois were between him and the lake, and directly in the section through which he must needs pass to reach his friend. Since the party gathered round the camp could not have attained that position so quickly, it was evident that the hostiles must be a new party, who chanced to be making their way to camp, and possibly were belated at the time the scout fired his rifle. Be that as it may, there were too many of them for him to attempt to pass through their line,

since the report of the rifle had placed them on the *qui vive.*

Had the necessity existed for such an attempt, he would have made it, and it is not unlikely that he would have succeeded. But there was no such necessity, and he showed his sense by not running a risk that could well be avoided.

"I told the younker to wait ten or fifteen minutes after hearin' my gun go off, and then to make his way home in the canoe without me," he reflected. "He has 'nough sense to do that, and he knows how to do it. Gracious! how much like his father, the Colonel, he is!"

There were no answering shots from the Iroquois, for at the best it would have been throwing away their ammunition to fire in the general direction of the white man who had baffled them in their intended enjoyment; but there was a quick scattering, and the whole group, with the exception of a single warrior and Queen Esther, started on a hunt for the daring white man.

Jed Stiffens cared little for all they could do. He would have looked upon it as only a pleasant diversion to outwit the whole band, even by broad daylight, inasmuch as they were at the rear, and he had never yet met the redskin who could outrun him.

But one of the wisest admonitions ever uttered is that the man who thinks he stands should take

heed lest he fall. With all of Jed Stiffens's subtlety, cunning, and woodcraft, he ran into an unexpected danger at the very moment when he believed none threatened him.

It did not take him long to throw all his enemies hopelessly behind. The first thing he did after that, was to halt and reload his rifle, in accordance with his rule, which has already been referred to more than once. Then, since he had decided to make no attempt to return to the Indian canoe, where he had left Jack Ripley, he threaded his way through the dark wood to the head of the lake, aiming for the point where the two had first entered the boat. This enabled him to flank the party that had appeared so unexpectedly, and headed him off.

The logical theory of the scout was, that by taking this course he arrived at the spot named considerably in advance of the possible coming of his friend; for he had travelled fast, and his instructions to Jack were to await his return for a brief period before attempting to leave in the canoe. He knew the lad would stay longer than the time set, and would not return along the shore of the lake until assured in his own mind that it was useless to wait any longer for him.

Acting upon this theory, which certainly seemed flawless, the scout came down to the silent lake and stood motionless in the deep shadows, as the

minutes passed while he awaited the appearance of his young friend. He was too accustomed to such experiences to make the common mistake of believing time was passing faster than was the fact. He decided that Jack would hold his position for half an hour, when he would start along the shore over the same course the two had followed when together. Since it had taken the scout about a half hour to reach the place where he was waiting, he allotted about the same period for the youth to bring the boat to him, for he was certain to use extreme care in the effort. When, therefore, a full hour had gone by, he found himself listening and peering into the gloom for the coming of Jack Ripley.

The same impressive silence brooded over lake and forest. The scout, standing thus, with his faculties keyed to the highest point, looked upward at the stars twinkling in the vault of heaven, and, with that reverent emotion which is natural to the most reckless of men, when they find themselves alone in a vast solitude, he instinctively asked the One whom he knew dwelt beyond those orbs of light, to hold the precious boy in His keeping and bring him safely out of the labyrinth of peril in which he was involved.

"It is You alone who can do it," he whispered in spirit. "And You have done it so many times for

Jed Stiffens, who ain't worth thinkin' 'bout, that I 'm sure You won't forgit to take care of the son of Colonel Ripley. For You must know he is too good a man to be spared."

Sh!—a faint, soft sound, like the flirt of a fish when it rises to the surface, stole through the stillness to the ear of the scout, and his thoughts dropped like a flash again to earth.

"It 's *him*," was his thought. "He handles a paddle like a master, and the only ears that could hear that ripple is them that b'longs to Jed Stiffens."

Faint as was the noise, it was from the right direction. An Indian canoe was creeping like a shadow along the wooded shore, heading toward the point where the scout was standing, expectant and delighted. He took a single step, which placed the toe of his moccasin in the edge of the water, and, leaning slightly forward, peered into the obscurity. Slowly the dim outlines of the prow of a boat assumed vague form, growing in distinctness so tardily that several moments seemed to pass without an increase of vision.

The pleased veteran emitted the guarded whistle, which he knew would be recognized the instant it reached the ears of Jack Ripley. Then he chuckled in his peculiar fashion, and said in a voice that ordinarily would not have been heard ten feet distant:

"You 're a little late, younker——"

The words were in his mouth, when the gloom into which he was peering was lit up by a blinding flash, the vicious crack of a discharged rifle broke the silence, and the canoe darted toward him like an arrow driven from a bow.

At the very moment that the scout was framing the words that were partly uttered, a sudden suspicion of his mistake flashed upon him. He had no time to leap back out of range, but with incredible quickness he bent his knees and dropped the upper part of his body.

Had the instinctive movement been the fraction of a second later, the bullet would have bored its way through his brain, but it passed over his crown and *zipped* among the undergrowth behind him. Before the shot could be repeated, he made a tremendous backward leap that landed him a dozen feet away, whirled about, darted several paces, and then abruptly halted, for he knew he was safe.

Jed Stiffens had made one of the few mistakes of his life, one that could not have brought him nearer death without reaching it, and his "promptings" did not allow him to spare himself.

"Of all the infarnal fools that has been 'lowed to keep his skulp on his crown, I 'm the biggest! The next time I do a thing like that, I 'll stand still and let the redskins have their own fun makin' holes in

my carcase, fur I 'll be so 'shamed that I won't be able to duck my head!"

As for the Senecas in the boat, who touched the shore a moment after the firing of the gun, they must have been puzzled to comprehend how it was the white man did not fall dead in his tracks, for the warrior who fired saw the form of the scout distinctly, since his situation was more conspicuous than that of those in the craft; but, in some unaccountable way, there was a miss, and the man, having whisked from sight into the depths of the wood, it was useless to pursue him, and no effort was made to do so.

Jed Stiffens's promptings were to steal back to the water's side, and return the shot that had given him such a shock, but it was characteristic of him to refrain. Now that he was safe himself, his thoughts instantly went out to Jack Ripley, and all his anxiety was centred in him.

The intrusion of the canoe and its occupants on the scene boded ill for the absent youth, for they had come from the direction of the hiding-place of the lad, while the new party that had shut off the fleeing scout from joining his young friend advanced from the same direction, demonstrating unquestionably that he was in the midst of danger and his enemies were on every side of him.

Had he taken care of himself when thus

threatened ? If so, would he still be able to extricate himself, when the Iroquois were not only in the wood but on the lake ? Where there were so many of them prowling through the forest in search of the scout, would they not inevitably come upon Jack Ripley, no matter how great the skill with which he endeavored to outwit them ?

The answers to these questions made the scout shudder. He needed no one to tell him what would follow if Jack Ripley should be captured. All of the scout's sympathies and thoughts went out to him. Could he have been given the power to place the youth safely back in camp by yielding his own life, he would have done it without a moment's hesitation.

But those were not the days of miracles, and he grimly set out to do all that was humanly possible for the absent lad.

The hope of Jed was that Jack was still hiding in the undergrowth along shore, or else skirting the bank in his canoe in the wake of the one that had preceded him. He, therefore, started to return to the spot.

In doing so, he kept near the lake, often pausing and listening for the faint dip of his paddle, but hearing nothing of it. Great as was his familiarity with the wood and his surroundings, it was impossible for him to determine the exact point where he

had made his landing, since it possessed no characteristic to distinguish it above any other portion of the wilderness in that vicinity.

But his woodcraft enabled him to hit it pretty closely, and as he drew near his halts became more frequent, while he did not hesitate to emit the faint whistling signals that had been agreed upon by him and Jack several days before. They were low and guarded, and he had been given a proof of the mischief they were likely to cause, when detected by an enemy; but the necessity for communicating with the youth was so pressing that the scout could neglect no possibility of doing so.

Standing motionless by the side of the lake, where he could look out on the vivid surface, he issued the low, trilling whistle at intervals of a few seconds, and then, standing like a statue, held his breath while waiting for the reply. So keen was his sense of hearing that absolutely no sound escaped him. He noted the rippling fall of a leaf behind him; the plash of a small fish that flirted to the surface far out on the lake was heard, and the soft whirr of a bird that skimmed past beyond his sight, as its wings fanned the darkness, reached his ear. But among them all was nothing suggestive of the sound that had passed his own lips fully a score of times.

The scout kept along the shore of the lake until he knew he had passed some distance beyond the

hiding-place of the youth, when he turned, and in the same guarded manner retraced his steps to the original starting-point. He had not discovered the first evidence of the fate of his friend. Then, with a depression of spirits which no pen can describe, he turned into the wood, and penetrated deeply in his search for the camp-fire of the hostiles, impelled thereto by the awful fear that Jack Ripley was a prisoner in their hands. It was relief indescribable that he discovered no proof of that catastrophe, though he could not forget that such might have been the fate of his young friend without his gaining knowledge of it.

Finally, Jed Stiffens returned to where they first entered the canoe, and, resting the stock of his rifle on the ground, and leaning on the muzzle, he gave himself up to a few minutes of meditation.

It is a merciful provision of nature that no one's spirits can remain depressed continuously. The rebound or reaction is certain to manifest itself. Despite the despair of the preceding hour or more, the scout began to see ground for hope. Perhaps Jack had crossed to the other side of the lake with his canoe, and made his way along the western shore on his return to camp. Perhaps he was doing so at that moment; or it may be he had already reached camp, and was wondering over the long absence of Jed himself.

There was one way of testing these theories, and the scout tested them. He hastened to camp and instituted careful inquiries. Alas! the result was the proof that his young friend was still absent.

Meanwhile, where *was* Jack Ripley ?

CHAPTER XXIX.

A STRANGE MEETING.

I AM sure that the reader of these chapters has formed a pretty good opinion of Jack Ripley. He was brave, patriotic, high-spirited, manly, and bright-witted,—qualities that were inherited from his parents, who gave him as freely to the service of his country as he offered himself.

But, after all, Jack was just as human as the rest of us, and I am compelled now to tell something about him which is anything but romantic, though it is not at all to his discredit. Since it is to be presumed that the reader is somewhat interested as to his whereabouts while his friend Jed Stiffens was making his search for him, I can give the information in a single sentence.

Jack Ripley was asleep!

His rest for several nights had been broken, but when he assumed the most comfortable posture possible in the canoe drawn well up under the bank, he had no more thought of succumbing to drowsiness than had Jed Stiffens while threading his way through the wilderness to the camp-fire of the

Iroquois; and thinking thus, he sank into a refreshing, dreamless slumber which continued right through that eventful night until the summer's sun appeared above the horizon.

Now, there was nothing strange, after all, in this, for the strongest man cannot fight off the insidious approach of sleep without action of the body that forces him to keep his senses about him; but the extraordinary feature of the situation was that Jack's lapse from consciousness should have brought no ill consequences to him. There can be no question that more than one of the hostiles who headed off Jed Stiffens's return to his friend passed within a few paces of the sleeping lad. The other canoe must have paddled not beyond arm's length of the stern, though the motionless boat was well hidden from view; but, most wonderful of all, Jed Stiffens, the peerless scout, unquestionably walked by his friend twice on that night, when there could not have been more than a rod between them. From a comparison of notes afterward, it is probable that when he made one of his many halts and signalled to Jack, the latter was reclining almost at his feet. Had there been the least light in the wood, Jed must have discovered him, but it has been shown that, with no suspicion of the truth, he passed on.

The lad must have slumbered as quietly as when a babe on his mother's breast, for the wonderfully

acute sense of hearing with which Jed Stiffens was gifted failed to note the gentle breathing of his friend, who sank into a state of delicious unconsciousness so promptly after the departure of the scout that he heard nothing of the report of his rifle, that followed within a brief space of time.

Jack Ripley, therefore, fell asleep off-hand, as may be said, and when he opened his eyes again the surrounding wood and lake were bathed in the warm sunlight of a bright summer day. It was some minutes before he recalled his wandering senses. He had sunk into an easy position in the bottom of the canoe, and, rising to a sitting posture, he stared wonderingly about him. The overhanging limbs, the water which showed at the stern of the craft, and the brooding stillness, quickly brought back the incidents of the preceding night.

In accordance with his invariable custom, he returned thanks to the One who had watched over him through the darkness, bathed his face and hands in the clear waters of the lake, and then, sitting up again, after using his pocket-handkerchief for a napkin, broke into hearty laughter, which he had learned to make as silent as his friend's.

"Well, if this does n't beat everything!" was his thought. "I was to wait a few minutes for Jed to come back, and I 've waited all night, and he has n't come yet; or, if he did," he added more

thoughtfully, " he did n't find me. I begin to feel worried about Jed."

Aye, but how much more worried, Jack, your friend was about you!

The lad felt a lively sense of hunger, but forced it from him, for much more momentous matters demanded his attention and thoughts. Stepping out from the canoe to stretch his limbs, he pondered deeply over his peculiar situation, and it did not take him long to reach in a general way the truth.

" If nothing happened to Jed, he came back to look for me, but was unable to locate the canoe in the darkness, though he must have come very near it. He has made up his mind that I grew tired of waiting for him, and went back to camp alone. Not finding me there, he is probably still searching for me."

Brief reflection convinced Jack Ripley that the best thing he could do was to look after himself, for he needed no one to warn him that he was in a most critical situation. His experience of the previous night was proof that the Iroquois were hovering in the woods all around him, and it was a work of extreme difficulty and danger to make his way through their lines to those of the army.

Stepping softly to the stern of the canoe, he parted the undergrowth and looked toward the head of the lake. The sight that greeted him was thrilling, for the sky in that direction was filled with

masses of black smoke, climbing toward the zenith, while sparks and embers were dropping like hail-stones into the water, some of them being carried almost to where he stood.

General Sullivan's army was getting in its fine work in style. Catharine's Town was in flames, which would continue until the whole was reduced to ashes and smouldering embers, while the destruction of the animals, fruit trees, and crops was certain to be as thorough as in the preceding instances. One of the primal objects of this invasion of the Indian country was already accomplished.

"How enraged the Iroquois must be!" reflected Jack. "If they could get hold of me and any of the rest of General Sullivan's men, would n't they make it lively for us!"

But the question remained, as to what he should do to extricate himself from his perilous surroundings. The course of the main army would be down the western side of the lake, whose shore was more than a mile distant from the youth, or slightly greater than that to the head of the sheet of water. It was easy to paddle the canoe to either point, provided there was safety in doing so. But there remained the likelihood of the Iroquois being on the opposite shore until driven away by the approach of the troops. They could remain until the soldiers were almost upon them.

If, therefore, Jack should set out to paddle across the water, he was likely to run into a trap, for, seeing his approach, the Indians would wait in concealment until it was impossible for him to return. His situation would be hopeless, if he was observed (as was quite likely) by enemies on the shore he was leaving, for then he would be caught between two fires.

The other course was to follow the eastern side, over the same route taken by him and Jed the evening before. But while, as it seemed to him, he was less liable to discovery, he would necessarily run into danger upon reaching the head of the lake, where many of the hostiles were prowling, even though they must be quite near the troops of General Sullivan.

The final plan was to abandon the canoe, and attempt to thread his way through the wilderness to the army by passing around the head of Seneca Lake. Any one of these three methods was of necessity attended with extreme risk, and Jack Ripley displayed only ordinary prudence when he sat down by the canoe and tried to decide in his own mind the best thing to do.

It would be tedious to follow the thread of his thoughts, for they took a wide range, but the decision he reached was to tarry a while longer, and then paddle with might and main for a point directly

opposite. His hope was that by waiting until the army was on the march again, he would have a chance of reaching it by adopting the course named. That he would be exposed to great danger, he did not attempt to deny to himself; for, if it so happened that he was descried by hostiles on the shore he was leaving, they could open fire or pursue him with a fair probability of capture before his friends could help him.

But, without dwelling further upon his perplexities, suffice it to say that he set about carrying out his decision. Seizing the prow of the canoe, he began to shove it clear of the bank, intending to leap into it and catch up the paddle, while the craft was gliding clear. But, instead of carrying out his purpose, he suddenly gripped the boat with both hands, and drew it still farther up the shore, snatched his rifle, and stood on the defensive.

At the critical moment, he heard the guttural exclamation of an Indian, accompanied by the ripple of a paddle. Another canoe was coming along the shore, and would pass the same minute. Had he been a few seconds earlier in shoving out his boat, it would have been all over with him. As it was, it looked very much as if he was caught in a snare.

But once more fortune was kind, for his act in drawing up the craft screened it from discovery, and, as he crouched down behind the prow of his

own craft, with weapon firmly grasped, he caught only a momentary glimpse of the other canoe and its occupants as it sped past on its way to the head of the lake.

This incident, so nearly fatal in its consequences, wrought a complete change in the plans of Jack Ripley. In a certain sense, it warped the clear judgment he had displayed in more than one critical situation. He felt that he could place no trust in the canoe. His enemies were more numerous in his immediate neighborhood than he had supposed, and by venturing out upon the open lake in the daytime, he would bring his own destruction.

His decision, therefore, was to attempt to pick his way back to the army overland, whereas, had he given full time to the consideration of the question, he would have seen that his wisest course was to stay where he was, either until darkness came again, when he could make use of the boat, or until the presence of the troops across the lake rendered it safe for him to make a dash for them.

Perhaps it was only natural that the last shock should render him nervously anxious to rejoin his friends. Be that as it may, no more than fifteen minutes had elapsed after the passage of the Indian canoe, when holding his rifle in a trailing position in his right hand, he turned his back upon the little boat that had served him so well, and started

through the mile of intervening wilderness to the head of the lake, where the invading army was working such mischief with the town and crops of the Queen of the Senecas.

But Jed Stiffens himself could not have been more cautious and guarded in his movements than Jack Ripley. He literally advanced step by step, often pausing to listen and peer into the surrounding twilight of the forest. He was in that highly wrought condition that made him see danger when none existed, and his progress was therefore slow and labored. Frequently he crouched in the dense undergrowth, and waited throughout the exciting minutes for the passage of a foe who was nowhere near. His gun was kept at a full cock all the time, for he was resolved not to be caught off his guard, but, if it should be necessary to go down, to sink with colors flying.

It thus came about that he had passed two thirds of the distance to the head of the lake without the occurrence of anything serious, when he was caught.

He had halted, under the impression that some sound had reached him whose nature he did not understand, nor was he able to determine the point whence it came. While listening and trying to solve the puzzle, it sounded again, directly behind him, and, turning his head like a flash, he found

himself confronted by a single person, and that person a woman!

She was dressed in a short calico dress, of gaudy color, and in anything but a state of tidiness. Beneath it her thin ankles showed, covered with brown woollen stockings, and she wore coarse shoes. A sash was gathered about her waist, and behind it was thrust the handle of a tomahawk, whose blade rested above. A thin red shawl was flung about her shoulders and held in place in front by the left hand, whose muscular fingers clasped it over the flat breast.

The head was bare of any artificial covering, but the gray hair was luxuriant, and dangled in front and at the back, where it descended to a length of fully three feet. The face was that of a very aged woman, for it was seamed with innumerable wrinkles, and only one or two teeth showed when she opened her mouth to speak.

The most notable point in her strange appearance was her eyes, which were small and bead-like, and overhung by shaggy eyebrows, black, and without a gray hair visible. Beneath them the intensely black eyes glittered like a serpent's, and, as she fastened them upon the amazed Jack Ripley, they sparkled and glowed with a hatred as deadly as that of a wounded she-panther.

CHAPTER XXX.

A STIRRING EXPERIENCE.

JACK RIPLEY recognized the singular looking creature before him as Catharine Montour, otherwise Queen Esther, of the Seneca branch of the Six Nations. He had heard her described so often that no doubt was in his mind. The reader will note that, since Jed Stiffens looked upon her the previous night, she had procured an additional garment in the shawl, and her ugly knife had given place to the equally murderous tomahawk, which she was capable of handling with the expertness of Brant or Red Jacket himself.

Jack's first anxiety, after the shock of the surprise, was to know whether any of her friends were within sight or easy call. His failure to discover them was a great relief. His own gun was ready for instant use, and he did not propose to be offered up a sacrifice by another person, even though it was a woman.

For a full minute the two stared silently at each other, without the slightest movement on the part of either. The old woman could not fail to observe

that the youth held a cocked rifle so grasped that it could be aimed and fired in a twinkling, and she was therefore circumspect.

"Do you know who I am?" she suddenly asked in a low voice, that was by no means harsh and whose accent was faultless.

A peculiar waggish emotion came over Jack Ripley, probably the result of the reaction from the great strain he had been under for the previous hour or more.

"Yes; you 're the woman that killed over a dozen men at Wyoming last summer, when they could n't help themselves. What a brave old thing you are, to dash out the brains of prisoners when you had others to hold them fast for you!"

The wrinkled face glowed with fury.

"Yes; I did it!" she said, with indescribable fierceness. "I wish I could do it to all of your people! Do you see the smoke that is in the air, and all through the woods, so that one can hardly breathe. Do you know what that means?"

"It means that Catharine's Town is fast going up in fire. It means that General Sullivan is giving your people a taste of what you gave ours. But he does not come when all your warriors are away. They are at home or hiding in the woods. Why does not Queen Esther rally them and drive back the invaders? Shall I tell the reason? It is because you

and they are cowards! You can make war against old men and women, and children but your hearts sink when you see *men* before you."

"You are brave to speak to a woman thus. The beard is not yet grown on your face."

Jack Ripley gravely passed one hand along his cheeks and over his chin, as if to test the truth of this charge. With an odd smile, he replied:

"There are signs of a beard there, though you may not see them. It 'll come in due time, and I can wait. But hold on!" he said, warningly.

Watching her closely, he saw signs that indicated she was about to utter a cry or signal intended to bring some of her allies to the spot.

"If you want to see a poor, humble private shoot the life out of a queen, just let out a single yawp, or try to bring some of your Indians here! There are not many of my people that would spare you as long as I have. It is well that you hide yourself where none of the friends of those you murdered can reach you! I 'm watching you for the first movement of a trick! If you want to deprive the Senecas of their queen, just open that pretty mouth of yours and try to signal to some of the Iroquois."

It must be admitted that Jack Ripley was personal in his remarks, but he "had the drop" on Queen Esther, and could not deny himself the privilege,

though the time and place were anything but befitting.

As for Catharine Montour, she could not repress her burning hatred of the handsome youth who flaunted her thus openly. She placed her thin right hand on the handle of the tomahawk at her waist, and took a step forward.

"Hold! Don't come any nearer!" warned the youth. "I don't fancy your looks. I prefer a rattlesnake to you!"

"Ah! if you would lay aside that gun, I would wring your neck like a chicken, though I could never wash the stain from my hands."

"I don't think I should be much afraid of that, even if you are pretty good at wringing necks of those that cannot help themselves. But I 'm a pretty good-sized boy, and would be apt to make trouble."

It struck Jack at that moment that Queen Esther was looking at something behind him, and, fearing that one of her friends was stealing upon him from the rear, he turned his head for a second and glanced thither but saw no one.

It was a clever trick of the woman, and one that has been imitated many times since by shrewd men when caught in a similar dilemma. Quick as was the turning of his head and instant as was the bringing of it back, it gave her the opportunity for which

she had manœuvred. With lightning-like swiftness she snatched the tomahawk from the girdle at her waist, circled it over her head, and let it fly as unerringly as an arrow, and with incredible force, directly, at his face.

Not less quick was the youth in ducking. He heard the terrible missile whizz with vicious swiftness over his crown, and, striking the trunk of a hickory directly behind him, the blade was half-buried in the solid wood, the handle quivering from the violence of the impact.

In a twinkling he straightened up, and his rifle was at his shoulder. Seeing the failure of her frightful effort, Catharine Montour uttered a wild shriek, and, whirling on her heel, dashed off at the top of her speed.

Despite her age, she could run like a deer, and, as she sped in and out among the trees, she dodged from side to side, in the effort to disconcert the aim of the youth, giving utterance to piercing cries as she ran.

Jack Ripley could have brought her down with the greatest ease, and there was a single moment when he meditated doing so. But he did not fire, for there was something unspeakably repugnant in the thought of shooting an old woman, even though she was the most ferocious of her sex.

But those cries of hers meant mischief for him, and,

while she was leaping from side to side, and going like a panic-stricken Indian, he also wheeled and gave evidence of his attainments in the same line. Thus two mortal enemies presented the extraordinary sight of fleeing from each other at the same moment at their most desperate speed.

One of the features of the unique situation was that neither of the fugitives, as they may be considered, looked around for a time, since to do that, when swiftness is the sole purpose of a runner, is often fatal. As the immeasurably precious seconds passed, without the discharge of the rifle that the aged woman had seen levelled at her, she must have felt a revival of hope, for, with every leap an increased number of trees were interposed between her and her enemy, and his aim must inevitably become more uncertain. None the less, she kept her yelling fully up to the first standard.

Meanwhile, Jack Ripley, as he used his legs for all that was in them, was thinking hard. Although comparatively near the head of the lake, he was certain that to maintain his headlong pace would carry him inextricably into the power of the Iroquois. Believing, too, that Catharine Montour had noted the course he had taken, he ventured to look back, after gaining a safe distance, to make sure he was out of her field of vision. Assured of that, he changed his line of flight abruptly; and, instead of

following a course parallel with the shore of the lake, he headed for the lake itself.

The distance was so brief that a few minutes took him to the shore, and, at the instant of doing so, he discovered he was in for it again; for, directly in front of him, was an Indian canoe with a single occupant, who was in the very act of landing. He was stepping from the boat when the noise made by the feet of the youth caused him to look up, and he saw him not a dozen paces away and coming like a racehorse.

The gun of the Iroquois still lay in the boat, and he was about to reach for it, when Jack called in a suppressed but fierce voice:

"Drop that! Clear out! I want that canoe!"

The Indian may not have been a profound English scholar, but he could not fail to understand the meaning of this command. There was no opening for his escape on shore, and he gave over his attempt to recover his weapon; but, as the only recourse left, he gathered his muscles and, with a tremendous bound, went far out into the lake and disappeared. Like all his race, he was a powerful swimmer, and his sole aim was to elude the foe bearing down upon him.

Jack was very glad to have the Iroquois out of his path, and, without waiting to see where his head reappeared, he ran the canoe clear of the shore,

sprang into it, and, dropping his gun beside the other weapon, caught up the paddle. One sweep spun the craft about, and he sent it skimming along the bank toward the head of the lake, upon which he had now fixed his hopes.

He was fairly going when the terrified Seneca, having swum a goodly distance below the surface, was forced to come up for a mouthful of air, the depth of the lake close inshore giving him opportunity for swimming and diving. Unaware of the change of position of the canoe, his crown rose directly on the right of the boat, and within arm's reach. Catching sight of the mass of black hair and dripping eagle feathers, Jack Ripley brought down the paddle with spiteful force upon the warrior's crown. The victim was so startled that, pausing only long enough to catch a half-breath, he went down again, making sure that when he rose next time, it was at a safe distance from the tormentor who pursued him with so much malevolence.

He was successful and, scrambling to land, began a series of yells after the style of Catharine Montour, and, like hers, intended to draw the attention of his friends in the wood, though her calls had ceased some time before.

There was no way of stopping these summonses, and, without paying them attention, Jack Ripley swung the ashen blade with all the skill of which he

was master. It will be remembered that he was now comparatively near the head of the lake, and he was aiming for that point, hopeful that it was so close to a strong body of troops that by leaping out of the canoe and making a short run he could reach safety.

The conflagration of Catharine's Town was still raging. The smoke at times was so dense and all-pervading that it was difficult to breathe, while the live sparks were continually dropping about him. Several stinging points, like needle-pricks, apprised Jack that some of them had landed on his neck and hands, but he paid them no heed. Had the woods been dry enough to burn, the whole country would have been swept by flames.

One exasperating accompaniment of this was that in places the smoke gathered in layers or strata, and was so thick that not only did Jack's eyes smart, as he paddled through them, but often he could not see where he was going. Once or twice he ran inshore, and then speedily found himself farther out on the lake than he intended.

But he was making for the head of the sheet of water, and it could not be far off. From the direction of the burning town came shouts and the sound of gun-firing. Then the rattle of rifles was heard on the bank to his left. He was wondering at the cause of all this shooting, since manifestly it was impossible for the Indians to make any organized

resistance, when a splinter flew from the paddle near his upper hand, and he heard the ping of a bullet as it passed in front of his eyes.

"By gracious! they 're shooting at *me!*" was the startling conviction that came to him the same moment.

The smoke was so heavy all about him that he could not tell where the flying bullets came from, except that they were from the shore he had left. Not meaning to be diverted from his goal, he headed the canoe farther out into the lake, with the hope of getting beyond sight of the redskins who were using him for a target. But going only a short distance, he swerved again, and aiming for the upper part of the lake, dipped the paddle deep, and swung it with all the strength of his muscular arms.

Again there was a rattling fire, but inasmuch as he saw no evidence of the bullets passing near him, he hoped he was not serving once more as a target. If he was wrong, the Iroquois were unmistakably displaying poor markmanship that forenoon.

A brief while afterward, Jack turned the prow of the boat toward land, and, driving it hard against the shore, leaped out, caught up his own rifle, leaving that of the Indian whom he had frightened away. He had determined to abandon the boat, and make a run for the brief space intervening between him and safety.

To his dying day, General Sullivan maintained that the arrival of Jack Ripley, at the end of the flight we have described, was one of the most striking special providences in the career of that well-known military leader.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A TIMELY ARRIVAL.

NOW that General Sullivan had fairly entered upon his work, he displayed the same merciless vigor that he had shown from the first.

Like all his officers and men, he was astir at an early hour. Before the torch was applied to Catharine's Town, he and General Clinton walked through the street, surveying with grim anticipation the pretty residences that were doomed soon to go up in flame and smoke. They halted in front of the handsome dwelling near the centre, of which we have already given a description, and surveyed the structure and its surroundings.

"That 's the home of Queen Esther," remarked the commander. "Did I not know her terrible character, and the hideous ferocity she has shown to our race, I should feel a tinge of pity for her, for she is a very old woman."

"Old in sin and wickedness," commented Clinton, whose sternness of disposition equalled that of his senior in command. "The most unwise thing we could do would be to show leniency toward her."

"None is to be shown,—you may depend upon *that*. If I could lay hands upon the Hecate, I should make her a prisoner, and hold her as a hostage for the Christian treatment of our own people. She has a great deal of influence among the Senecas and all the Six Nations. Were she and Red Jacket dead, we should have little trouble with the Iroquois."

General Sullivan beckoned to a group of soldiers to approach. They came forward, and the leader of the squad saluted.

"Begin on that building," said the General, pointing to the "palace." "There seems to be no wind, and you will have to start the fire in other places, but we must show the absent Queen due consideration," added Sullivan, with a smile.

Three of the men ran forward and stepped upon the piazza fronting the house. The door was locked, but several lusty kicks caused it to swing backward on its hinges, and the men passed inside. They had with them flint and steel and tinder, and a few minutes later a thin, blue column of smoke began curling through the open door. The crash and jingle of glass followed, and the vapor poured from the windows.

"All is going well," said Sullivan; "and if we do not move we shall find our position uncomfortable."

The conflagration seemed to start from a dozen different points at the same moment and, by the time the two were fairly clear of the town, the houses were one mass of roaring flame.

Just beyond the buildings the two officers separated. Sullivan saw that everything was going right, and, leaving his horse in charge of an aide, he walked a little way to a piece of rising ground near the lake which afforded him a better view of the work of his devastating army. Although everything seemed to be in inextricable confusion, as is generally the case under similar circumstances, yet his experienced eye told them that no further directions were required from him. His staff and assistants could be depended upon to direct every action with promptness and skill.

Taking a position so near the burning town that he distinctly felt the additional warmth in the air, General Sullivan folded his arms over his chest, and watched the strange and stirring scene. With all his military experience and skill, and in view of the admirable manner in which he had brought his command thus far through the Indian country, it did not occur to the officer that he was assuming any personal risk in thus moving to one side, even for so short a distance from his army.

The Iroquois, like sullen, wild beasts, were prowling through the surrounding woods, and the sight of

the conflagration so incensed them that many displayed more daring than at any time previous. Shots were exchanged between the warriors and the exposed troops, several of whom were injured, while a still larger number of Indians were picked off by the soldiers.

The space where General Sullivan was standing was hardly half an acre in extent. Between him and the burning town the course was comparatively open, but a thin fringe of forest and undergrowth intervened between him and the lake. He had stood but a brief while in this position, when to his amazement an Indian emerged from the wood in the direction of the lake and approached him on a swift, noiseless walk.

The sight of the Iroquois awoke the officer to the risk he ran in taking this exposed position, for nothing would have been easier than for the Seneca to pick him off without the slightest warning. The General laid his hand on his sword, and in his quick, impulsive way confronted the savage.

"What do you want of me?" he demanded.

As he asked the question, he recognized the Indian as Red Jacket, who, contrary to his custom, was unaccompanied by an interpreter. The exigency of the situation forbade his making use of such a convenience, and, despite his usual stoicism and self-possession, it was plain he was laboring under

great excitement. Such must have been the case, for, otherwise, he would not have attempted to hold a conversation in the language of his hated enemies.

General Sullivan was exasperated at sight of the sachem, for he rightly suspected his errand. He had learned the duplicity of the Seneca, who never would have dared thus to expose himself to the anger of the white men but for the protection that had been extended to him by the commander of the army. He was liable to be observed at any moment, and, had he been any one else, the probabilities are that he would have been shot before he had a chance to exchange a word with the American officer.

Red Jacket stopped in his walk when a half-dozen paces from the General, who angrily faced him. As if to intimate that he was approaching in the spirit of a flag of truce, he had left his rifle and hunting-knife behind, but a tomahawk was at his girdle.

"Heap bad!" remarked the Seneca, waving his hand toward the burning town.

"I suppose it is to you; but to me and my men it looks good. It will remind your people of Wyoming, Schoharie, and Cherry Valley."

"Red Jacket no see—he not dere."

This remark confirmed the belief of Sullivan, and deepened his anger. He knew Red Jacket had approached him for some selfish purpose of his own.

He cared little what calamities came upon the rest of his people, provided he escaped.

"I have heard that story before, and want to hear no more of it. You have been with your people ever since I started up the Susquehanna, and done all you could to rouse the Six Nations to fight us. I don't blame you for that, for that was your right, and we were invading your country. But you are the coward who stood behind and urged your men to battle. You deserve punishment as much as Queen Esther; and, what is more, Red Jacket, you will receive no further consideration from me."

Instead of resenting these words, the Seneca said in a low, pleading voice, which none knew better than he how to assume:

"Kanadaseaga dere—Red Jacket lib dere."

He pointed down the lake in the direction of the village he named, which was the capital of the Senecas, and stood on the site of the present town of Geneva.

"I learned that long ago, and because of that you may be sure some of my men will pay it a visit and treat it as they have treated Catharine's Town. We shall not spare a dwelling, and I shall make sure that *yours* is the first to burn."

"Red Jacket friend ob white man—he——"

The impetuous Sullivan could hold his temper no longer. Instead of making reply to the Seneca, he

whirled angrily on his heel, and started to walk away, as notice that he would hold no further conversation with him.

The instant his back was turned, the painted face of Red Jacket became like a demon's. All the fierce hatred of his nature flamed to a white heat. Here was the commander of the American army with his back toward him! In a twinkling the savage could drive his tomahawk into his head or body, and then dart off into the forest. True, there would be some risk, but in the confusion he had a good chance of getting away before his deed was discovered.

And what an exploit for Red Jacket! How Cornplanter, Brant, and the rest would become dumb in his presence when it was learned that he, Red Jacket, had slain General Sullivan in personal combat! No opportunity could be more favorable than that which was now suddenly and unexpectedly presented to him.

These thoughts, and the sachem's resolution crystallized in the twinkling of an eye. He grasped his tomahawk, which none could hurl with more deadly force and accuracy than he. But, at the moment he was about to draw and launch the missile, he glanced behind him to make sure his line of retreat was open.

It was not, for at that very moment Jack Ripley,

completing his desperate run from the margin of the lake, where he had leaped out of his canoe, emerged into the clearing, rifle in hand, and stopped short at the extraordinary sight before him.

It was impossible at the first glance to catch its full meaning. The Seneca was quick to grasp the situation. He knew that if he hurled the tomahawk, as he was on the point of doing, he would be shot dead by the young American, who probably would fire while the sachem was in the act of driving the missile into the body of the officer.

Something in the expression of the Seneca's face suddenly impressed General Sullivan, before he had taken five steps, when, realizing his own rashness, he drew his sword and whirled to confront the one whom he thoroughly distrusted. He saw Jack Ripley just beyond, his rifle half-raised, and evidently with a suspicion of the truth. Red Jacket's hand was on the partly drawn weapon, when, quick to note his "flash in the pan," he shoved the implement back into his girdle, strode hastily to the forest, and vanished.

"Give me your hand, Jack!" was the impulsive exclamation of General Sullivan, as he strode toward the astonished youth. "You saved my life!"

"I am not so sure of that," replied Jack, to whom matters were not yet fully clear. "I don't quite understand what 's been going on."

"If you don't, I do. I had snubbed Red Jacket, and was walking away from him. He was so angered that he was in the act of drawing his tomahawk to bury into my head or back, when I suppose he glanced around to see whether the way was open for his escape. He happened to see you, and that was enough, or, rather, too much for him."

The incensed youth looked toward the wood, where the Seneca had disappeared. His temper was fully roused.

"If I had known that, I should have shot him any way. I *will do it yet!*"

He started on a run after the sachem, for never since the reader has made the acquaintance of the young patriot was he so enraged over any incident. But General Sullivan sternly called him back.

"Have you lost your wits? How far could you follow him without some of his people shooting you down?"

"Sartinly. Don't try to be a bigger fool than you are now, 'cause you 're a big 'nough one already."

It was Jed Stiffens who stalked into the opening, coming from the direction of the burning town. He was prosecuting his despairing search for his young friend, when providentially he came upon him, a few minutes after his flight from the harassing Iroquois.

Jack was slightly bewildered by the turn of matters. He had just awakened to the fact that it was his opportune arrival that prevented Red Jacket killing General Sullivan, when, as he viewed it, the whole thing was spoiled by his own idiotic attempt to pursue the Seneca, from whose people he had just effected one of the narrowest escapes conceivable.

Ashamed, he was on the point of apologizing, when his old friend the scout joined them, and indulged in his personal remark, that was not calculated to improve matters.

"None of that, Jed," said the commander. "This young man has been the means of saving my life, and I cannot permit any slur upon him in my presence."

"Wal," was the imperturbable response; "there 's a good many kind of fools, Gin'ral; and to my mind the wust is the head of a army that walks off into the wood, knowin' that the varmints is all 'round him, and, by doin' the same as aforesaid, says to the aforesaid varmints, 'Here I is; if you don't want to plug me with a bullet, why I hain't no 'bjection to you splittin' me apart with a tomahawk.' Gin'ral, what do you think of *that* sort of fool?"

A most impudent question, indeed. But, though the face of General Sullivan flushed, he could not be angry at the grinning Jed Stiffens, who "paused for a reply."

"I think it is wise for us to make a change of base. As for you, Jack, be assured that the favor you did me this morning shall not be forgotten. Come, my friends, we must not linger here."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"THE LAST OF THE SENECAS."

IT is useless to dwell upon the further particulars of the historic invasion of the country of the Six Nations by General Sullivan, in the summer and early autumn of 1779. The work was so similar to that already described that the story would be uninteresting because of its sameness.

The capital of the Senecas, Schoharie, near Cayuga Lake, Canandaigua, at the head of the sheet of water of the same name, and Honeoye, were laid in ashes without any resistance on the part of the inhabitants. Entering the lovely valley of the Genesee, the Indians, having hidden their women and children in the forest, lay in wait on the flats near the head of Conesus Lake, but were quickly put to flight. Upon approaching Little Beard's town, Lieutenant Boyd went forward to reconnoitre. As stated in another place, his party was ambushed by Brant and his warriors, nearly every man, killed and Lieutenant Boyd captured and tortured to death.

General Sullivan then spread his troops over the valley, laying waste the splendid fields of grain,

shooting the cattle, destroying forty towns, among which was Genesee, the capital of the Six Nations, and turning a fertile region into a black, smouldering waste. So complete was the destruction, that many of the Indians perished of hunger during the following winter. The American commander's intention was to push westward and capture the English fort at Niagara, the centre of British and Indian intrigue; but he advanced so slowly that he was obliged to turn back without accomplishing this desirable purpose.

The blow to the Six Nations was a terrific one, but they were not destroyed and, before many months passed, renewed their outrages against the exposed settlements, though not to the extent that would have been the case but for Sullivan's devastating visit.

A strange fact must be mentioned. The Iroquois knew all this had been done by the direct command of General Washington, whom they called the Town Destroyer, and yet their veneration for that remarkable man seemed never to diminish. The belief prevailed among the Iroquois that he was the only white man that ever was allowed to enter heaven. According to their legend, he occupies a mansion at the entrance to the happy hunting grounds, walking back and forth in full uniform, while the faithful Indians, as they pass him, bow low in respectful silence.

On the charred ruins of their burned towns, some of the Indians built a few huts, and eked out a miserable existence until the dismal winter—one of the severest of the century—had passed. The others fled to Niagara, where the garrison gave them what scant succor was at their command.

General Sullivan, on his return, arrived at Easton, Pa., about the middle of October, having been absent five and a half months, traversing nearly three hundred miles over mountains, through forests, across swamps and rivers, and amid hostile Indians, with a comparatively trifling loss of his men. He received the thanks of Congress for his work. As has been stated, Colonel Daniel Brodhead, starting from Pittsburg, destroyed a number of Indian towns, and returned without losing a member of his command.

A few words may be added concerning General Sullivan. He never forgot his obligation to Jack Ripley, and, on his recommendation, the young patriot was made a first lieutenant before he reached the age of seventeen years. At the same time, he wrote a letter to his father, Colonel Ripley, and to General Washington, in which he referred to the young man in the warmest terms of admiration.

It was said at the opening of this work that General John Sullivan was an officer of unequal ability. He cannot be ranked among the best generals of

the Revolution, though he was a fine patriot, a good soldier, and did excellent service. His impulsiveness, his persistency in enforcing his own views upon Congress, his strenuous complaints when he did not conceive himself rightly used, and his outspoken condemnation of many of the acts of the law-making body, made him unpopular with the members, and he would have been deprived of his command but for the influence of Washington. His health had suffered somewhat on his Indian campaign, and, not feeling satisfied with his treatment, he resigned, Congress promptly accepting his resignation. Upon his return home, he resumed the practice of law, and was immediately elected to Congress, in which body he took his seat in 1780. He withdrew the following year, and resumed his law practice at Durham, New Hampshire, where he made his home. He was appointed Attorney-General of the State in 1783, helped to frame the State constitution, and was chosen a member of the Council. He was elected Governor in 1786, re-elected the next year, and again in 1789. When Washington was President, he appointed him Judge of the District of New Hampshire, which office he filled until his death, in January, 1795.

After the conclusion of the campaign against the Six Nations, Jack Ripley joined the army under the immediate command of Washington, where, greatly

to his delight, he was brought into close contact with his father. The two passed safely through the final campaign at Yorktown, where the brilliant services of the young man made him a captain, and won the promotion of brigadier-general for his father. Our last words regarding these two admirable characters will be found in the succeeding chapter.

In recalling what has been written about Red Jacket, sachem and orator of the Senecas, we are aware that much of it has not been of a pleasing nature, but it was all true, and characteristic of that extraordinary man. He lacked the unselfish ambition of King Philip and Pontiac, and had none of the ability of Tecumseh, who was undoubtedly the greatest American Indian that ever lived.

Red Jacket had the one merit of understanding his own deficiencies. Cornplanter, Brant, and others rallied him to his face on his cowardice, and he did not deny it. The following incident is quoted from the *Life of Brant*, by Colonel William L. Stone:

"During the Revolutionary war he had, on some occasion, exhorted his followers to behave with courage in an engagement expected to take place, promising that he would himself be found in the hottest of the fight. But when the engagement

came on, Red Jacket was missing, and was found during the battle cutting up a cow belonging to an Indian, which he had killed. One day, when dining at my house [Thomas Morris] with Captain Brant, Cornplanter told the story as if the act had been committed by some other Indian. He and Brant laughed exceedingly at the anecdote and at Red Jacket's confusion. The latter attempted to join in the laugh, but was evidently very much embarrassed."

It was because of this incident that Captain Joseph Brant, in a letter to his friend, the Duke of Northumberland, in 1805, referred to Red Jacket as "Cow Killer."

Of the Seneca's duplicity and double dealing there are too many authentic instances for it to be doubted. It is not worth while to recall them. In our references to him we have taken some slight liberties, which may be conceded to be the privilege of the story-writer. Red Jacket was not a sachem throughout the Sullivan campaign, that distinction coming to him some time later; but his great ability had already made him a man of vast influence among his people, and, though the title may not have been technically his, yet to all intents and purposes he was a sachem.

When once asked if he was a warrior, the Seneca replied, "I am an orator — I was born an orator,"

and it is as such that he will always be remembered and honored, for we can but repeat the statement already made, that he was unquestionably the greatest orator ever produced by his race.

We have referred to him, as have many writers, as "The Last of the Senecas," which, in point of fact, is a misnomer, since the Senecas are probably as numerous to-day as ever in their history, and many have been living for years upon their fine reservation in Western New York. But the sentiment intended is that the tribe has never produced an orator since the death of Red Jacket that can be compared with him.

Peace was made with the Six Nations in 1784, when many of them emigrated to Canada. They fought on the side of the Americans in the War of 1812, with the exception of a portion in Ohio, who joined the hostiles in that section. They emigrated to the Indian Territory in 1831, but the rest remained in New York.

The wise Washington knew of Red Jacket's genius, and of his great and growing influence among his people. His aim was to win him over to the side of civilization, and thereby gain his assistance in the improvement of his people, and their elevation from their degrading barbarism. Since Red Jacket was an enemy, it was necessary to strike at him, but Washington requested General Sullivan

to extend all consideration to him that was fitting in the peculiar condition of affairs.

Although the incidents narrated may make it seem that these efforts were unsuccessful, yet they were not wholly so. Red Jacket always retained a veneration for the Father of his Country, and was one of those who believed he was the only white man admitted to heaven. In 1792, during the Presidency of Washington, Red Jacket headed a delegation of his tribe which visited Philadelphia. He made a number of speeches, all of which were creditable to his genius. It was on this occasion that Washington presented him with a fine silver medal, bearing the President's likeness. Red Jacket was very proud of it, and wore it conspicuously to his death.

He remained a friend of the American people through the remainder of his life, for he saw that it was folly and madness to contend against a nation so immeasurably superior in strength to his own. But in one respect he was unchangeable. He was a pagan at heart, and immovably opposed to Christianity. When, in later years, his wife became a Christian, he refused to live with her, though they were afterwards reconciled.

His replies to the arguments of the missionaries were ingenious and able, but it is a sad fact that his most powerful logic was when he pointed out the

inconsistencies of the professing Christians, and showed how greatly the Indians had suffered and how much they had been degraded by contact with the whites.

Red Jacket furnished proof in his own person of the moral injury resulting from his acquaintance with the white people, for he became fond of strong drink, and when he was in middle life gave way to frequent debauchery. When selected to make a speech upon an important occasion, he would do so in his earnest and impressive manner, and an hour later be found helplessly intoxicated. Regarding the peculiarity of his wonderful gift of oratory, it was said that although those who were ignorant of his language could not fully appreciate the force and beauty of his speeches, when received through the medium of an interpreter—generally coarse and clumsy—yet such was the peculiar gracefulness of his person, attitudes and action, and the mellow tones of his Seneca dialect, and such the astonishing effects produced on that part of the auditory who did fully understand them, and whose souls appeared to be engrossed and borne away with the orator, that he was listened to by all with perfect delight. His figures were so sublime, so apposite, so beautiful, that the interpreters often said the English language was not rich enough to allow of doing him justice.

When his children had died of consumption, an old lady friend, who had known Red Jacket from his youth, expressed her sympathy for him. Fixing his black eyes upon the face of the lady, he replied:

"Red Jacket was once a great man and in favor with the Great Spirit. He was a lofty pine among the smaller trees of the forest. But after years of glory he degraded himself by drinking the fire-water of the white man. The Great Spirit has looked upon him in anger, and His lightning has stripped the pine of its branches."

The condition of the chief became so degraded because of his intemperate habits that at a Council of the Senecas, called for that purpose in September, 1827, he was formally deposed from his chieftaincy. As stated elsewhere, the first three names attached to this extraordinary document were those of Red Jacket's former partisans—Young King, Captain Pollard, and Little Billy.

This indignity roused in the tottering old man all the fire and eloquence of his greatest days. In an appeal to the Council he swept everything before him, and he was restored to his former rank by a unanimous vote. This was the greatest of his many signal triumphs, and as an orator stamped him as "The Last of the Senecas."

The monument erected over his remains bears the following inscription:

SA-GO-YE-WAT-HA,

(HE-KEEPS-THEM-AWAKE,)

RED JACKET,

CHIEF OF THE

WOLF TRIBE OF THE SENECAS,

THE FRIEND AND PROTECTOR OF HIS PEOPLE,

DIED JAN'Y 20, 1830,

AGED 78 YEARS.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A MEMORABLE EVENING.

ON a cool, crisp autumn evening, toward the close of the century, a group of three men sat in front of the roaring hickory-wood fire, in the spacious sitting room at Mount Vernon. Two of them were visitors, and the third was the host, General George Washington.

The fame of the peerless patriot was complete and world-spread. The dominant, all-controlling spirit of the Revolution, the first President of the Republic, was nearing the end of a career, the most honorable in all history ; the quiet home-life for which he had yearned through the stormy days of the past had come to him at last, and he was content, happy, and satisfied.

Distinguished men, not only of his own country but from across the Atlantic, made their pilgrimages to that modest home in order to meet face to face and converse with the Father of his Country,—the man of transcendant military and civic ability, who was unselfish and without ambition, save for the good of the land which he loved better than his life,

who gave his inestimable services without pay, who scorned self-aggrandizement, who kindly but firmly refused a third election to the presidency after having been twice the unanimous choice of his admiring citizens. This wonderful patriot was now a humble Virginia farmer, never so satisfied as when in the field with his toiling workmen, or sitting by his cheerful fire conversing with his old comrades of the Revolution, recalling the days that tried men's souls, when all but him believed the sun of liberty had set, and when he alone, with unfaltering vision and faith, saw the triumph that was certain to come to his country.

Washington was now an old man. He had the same magnificent frame that made him the greatest of athletes in his young manhood; but the grand proportions had shrunken somewhat, his step had lost a part of its elasticity, and when he read a paper or letter he was obliged to use spectacles, as befits those of his years.

The doors of Mount Vernon were never closed, for every one was welcome. The Southerners have always been the soul of hospitality, and Washington was their chief. His manner on this evening, when Lady Washington had bidden her visitors good-night and withdrawn to her apartments, showed his pleasure in the company of the two men, whose conversation ranged over many subjects, but centred

mainly upon the days when they were comrades in arms.

The elder of the callers was about the age of Washington, but was better preserved; for no other man had ever carried so mountainous a load as he and survived. He was remarkably handsome, with regular features, a complexion as fair as a woman's, erect, military carriage, and all the grace and courtesy of a gentleman of the old school. He was dressed with good taste, and, despite the general and widespread poverty of the country, was evidently in good circumstances.

The striking likeness between him and his companion left no doubt that they were father and son. The latter was approaching middle life, and was as attractive physically as the massive Washington at his age. He had the same classic features as his parent, but the dark hair and moustache showed none of the gray hairs that were plentifully sprinkled among those of his father, while his polished manner proved the excellent training received in his own home.

The elder was General Horatio Ripley, and the son was Captain Jack Ripley, our old friend and acquaintance, and their visit was in response to several urgent invitations from Mount Vernon.

It would be entertaining to give the entire conversation, which ran far into the evening, but we

have space for only a portion, that without effort on the part of any one finally drifted back to the time when Jack, at the age of sixteen years, eagerly availing himself of the permission of his parent, kissed his mother (still living and in good health), and tramped many miles through Central New York, by a roundabout course, to join General Sullivan in his expedition against the Iroquois or Six Nations.

"My old friend, Jed Stiffens, visited me some weeks ago," remarked Washington; "no one could be more welcome. Now that he has married, and become a sedate old farmer like myself, few unacquainted with his history would suspect that he was the most remarkable scout, so far as my knowledge extends, connected with our army at any time during the Revolution. His woodcraft was often incredible, and the strangest part of it all was that, throughout his perilous career, he was never seriously wounded."

"He was no more exposed, sir, than you," remarked Jack; "and you were not harmed."

"God protects those who have a divine mission to perform," were the reverent words of General Ripley. "That Jed incurred great risk is beyond question, but his wonderful woodcraft made it less than would be supposed; while you, my dear General, were the target again and again of Indian sharpshooters, as at Braddock's massacre, and of

the best marksmen in the British army, as at Princeton, Monmouth, and many other places."

Seated in front of the crackling logs, Washington looked thoughtfully into the cheerful blaze. It was not the first time that substantially the same remark had been made in his hearing, and his own religious nature inclined him to believe it was true; for had he not been miraculously preserved through all manner of perils, from his thousand-mile journey through the wilderness, across the province of Virginia, with his message to the French commander, more than forty years before, to the close of the Yorktown campaign, that brought independence to America? And for what purpose was the boon granted to him when it was denied to multitudes of others?

"Perhaps you are right," he said, after a minute's musing. "Looking back over those eventful years, and through my administration, I can see many, ah, many errors, that I have made, but I am sure my countrymen will give me credit for integrity of purpose in what I did."

"So will all coming generations who ever hear the name of Washington," said General Ripley, with moisture in his eyes and a gentle tremulousness in his voice.

"I am grateful—I am more than satisfied. My reward is beyond my deserts; but, after all, the true

heroes were the men who starved, dressed in rags, shivered in winter, panted in summer, without pay, and who underwent every possible privation and suffering for their country. Some of them were mere boys, impatient for their fathers' permission to shoulder their muskets and march forth to risk their lives, and who seized such permission the very day and hour it was granted."

That there might be no mistake as to this allusion, Washington, with the firelight falling full upon his benignant countenance, looked directly at Jack and smiled. The words came so unexpectedly that the fellow blushed furiously (a pleasing habit that still clung to him), and fidgeted in his seat. He tried to think of something to say in the way of parrying so direct a compliment, but could not, and his father came to his relief, or rather to his more complete discomfiture.

"Jack deserves all the praise you have given him, General. You have described just what he did, though plenty of others were equally patriotic, and you know he fought under our eyes at Yorktown."

Poor Jack was desperate. He must say something to stop all this, and he did it in the most awkward manner conceivable, by an abrupt question that had nothing whatever to do with the matter under discussion.

"Did Jed Stiffens ever say anything to you, General, about Red Jacket, the Seneca chieftain, sparing my life after taking me prisoner?"

Washington laughed quite heartily at the comical embarrassment of his young friend, but he could not refuse to go to his relief.

"He did; he claimed to understand Red Jacket as well as any one could understand him, and I thought I had a fair knowledge of his character; but Jed confessed that he could never make out why he decided to set you free when you were helplessly in his power."

"Jed overheard him refer very complimentarily to my father."

"That might have been genuine with most Indians, but it was not with Red Jacket. He hated all white people intensely, though he has become a good friend to us since. There must have been some other reason for his leniency to you. If you can enlighten me, I pray you to do so, for I confess that I have formed considerable curiosity on the subject."

It was Jack Ripley's turn: and throwing back his head, he made the big room ring with his merriment.

"The most unaccountable thing to me is that, with all of Jed's woodcraft, he never suspected the truth, which was as plain as the nose on his face. I meant to have a little sport with him over it, but it

had almost passed from my mind. I will not let him off easily when we meet again, for you know his farm is close to ours."

"Yes; he told me your father presented him with a hundred acres."

"The rascal!" exclaimed General Ripley, with a start. "I cautioned him particularly that he was never to say a word of that to any one. I have a great mind——"

"No, you have n't, General," interrupted Washington, reaching across from his chair, and laying his hand familiarly on the shoulder of his friend. "Jed did n't tell me until after he had talked a while. I accused you of doing that very thing, and the truthful fellow could not deny it. I suspected you from the first."

"And why did you suspect me?"

"Because, my dear General, it was just like you. It was your nature; but," he added, "we are off the subject. Captain, be good enough to clear up that little mystery we were talking about a minute ago."

"Red Jacket was looking directly in my face, and, though I could not comprehend his words, he was denouncing me and my father and uttering in his high-flown language my condemnation to death. I was certain of that from his manner. I was watching him closely, when, for the fraction of a

second he glanced, by pure accident, or perhaps in obedience to some subtle impulse, to the side of the clearing where we had halted. Instinctively and with the same swiftness I darted a look at the same point. As I did so, I saw the gleam of the barrel of a rifle, pointed from behind a tree full at the chief. He had caught sight of it, and knew what it meant. The trigger of that rifle would be pressed the instant he made the first movement against me, and Red Jacket knew it. Taking the cue like a flash, and so quickly that no one beside myself and he understood why, he changed his words to praise of my father, and declared that my life should be spared because of his friendship for him. It was a single beam of sunlight that had told him the momentous secret, and with astonishing cunning he took instant advantage of it. Had he not glanced toward the point, or had he done so a moment later or earlier, he would not have made the life-and-death discovery. Then he raised his voice so that the listening Jed should not miss a word of his revised speech, and set me free."

"And Jed Stiffens never suspected the truth?" asked the surprised Washington.

"No; it was not merely Red Jacket's lightning-like quickness in availing himself of the knowledge, but his amazement was so well counterfeited, when directly afterward Jed and his companions stepped

forth, that the deception was complete. The old scout was outwitted by the Seneca sachem."

"And why," asked Jack's father, "did you never tell Jed the truth?"

"General Washington had expressed to General Sullivan his wish that consideration should be shown to Red Jacket. Jed disliked the Seneca. As it was, he came near shooting him more than once, for he thoroughly despised him. I was afraid that, if I revealed Red Jacket's duplicity, it might increase his danger from the ill-will of the scout. There is no reason to keep the secret longer, and you may be sure that I shall have some quiet fun in rallying Jed on his blindness, which, after all, is not to be wondered at."

"It was a remarkable experience," commented Washington, "and your course reflects credit upon your motives."

At a late hour the reminiscences of the three came to an end, and they bade one another good-night and withdrew to their apartments. On the morrow, General Ripley and his son bade Washington farewell, and, returning to their home, never saw him again, for in the last month of the year 1799 the great man quietly breathed his last.

THE END.

CHARLES G. CRABTREE